



PlayStation®2

PlayStation®Portable

PLAYSTATION®3

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

FEBRUARY ISSUE 27 2009
www.gameplayer.com.au

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

KILLZONE® 2

THE RULES HAVE CHANGED! GAMING WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN!

KRATOS? PFFT... SOLID SNAKE? WAIT IN LINE

WOLVERINE

Slices the gaming world to shreds

FINAL VERDICT

SKATE 2

Is New San Vanelona up to scratch?

LET IT RAIN!

Heavy Rain makes a splash with all-new details!

HEAD BANGER'S BALL

Metallica hits Guitar Hero with a vengeance

LITTLEBIGPLANET EVOLVED: 20+ USER CREATED LEVELS YOU NEED TO PLAY!





A New Hero Emerges—Master the elite, acrobatic fighting style of history's most agile warrior.



An Epic, Open World—Your choices determine just how the story evolves.



A Deadly New Ally—Your partner, Elika, is your greatest weapon against the darkness.

"A SURE CONTENDER FOR GAME OF THE YEAR" - IGN

PG

Mild fantasy violence

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A LEGEND IS BORN

SWING

ROOF RUN

GRIP FALL

WALL RUN

DUEL



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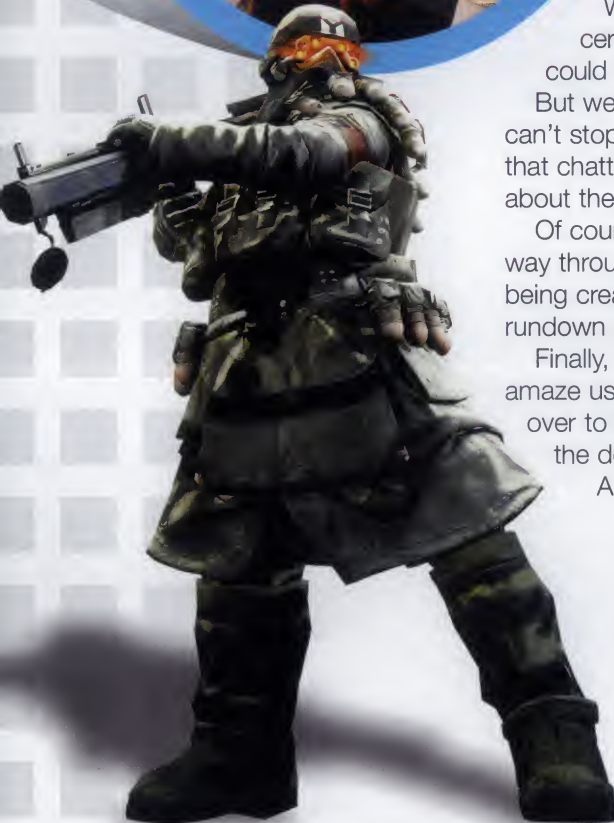
PG

RIP IT UP IN PARADISE

www.motorstorm.com



PLAYSTATION®3



There's a battle going down in every gamer's head right now over which is *the* game! Well, rest assured because *the* game is *Killzone 2* and its release is just around the corner.

We're lucky we even got the magazine out the door this month due to the hours at our desks spent gazing at the way the shadows caught the muzzle of a gun, or the flag fluttered in the wind.

We tip our hats to you Guerrilla Games, you certainly pulled this one off boys! If only we could devote an entire magazine to you.

But we can't – there *is* that game that Mark can't stop talking about (no, not *MGS4*, although that chatter will never die). We're talking, of course, about the almighty *SKATE 2*.

Of course, since some of us are still making our way through some of the great *LittleBigPlanet* levels being created by users worldwide, we give you a rundown on some of the best.

Finally, *Heavy Rain*! The game that continues to amaze us with its intense photorealism saw us head over to Paris to check in with Quantic Dream on the development process.

A big year – and its only just began!

Ness

VANESSA MORGAN
EDITOR

PSN: sibernaut **Playing:** LBP **Wanting:** Resident Evil 5

FAVOURITE LBP DOWNLOADABLE LEVEL?



MARK SERRELS

After ploughing through the *LBP* user levels en masse, I decided something was missing – a full scale *LBP* remake of *Highlander*. I'm making it now – get ready for the quickening!

PSN: Serrels
Playing: Prince of Persia
Wanting: Resident Evil 5



PHILLIP JORGE

I love the one based on the old *American Gladiators* TV show (only because you miss looking at all those buff dudes from the show – Ed) I got third best score on that one!

PSN: PhilLipO
Playing: Dead Space
Wanting: Killzone 2



JAMES COTTEE

I particularly like the levels that take overblown hype-fests like *Halo* or *Gears* and burst their bubbles with wacky platforming satires. Also – copyright infringement is edgy.

PSN: DrWho3987
Playing: Valkyria Chronicles
Wanting: Patapon 2



JAMES ELLIS

I've been so busy honing my ravioli folding skills I haven't tapped into the *LBP* vibe. But if Sony brings out a level that plays like *Street Fighter IV*, I'll be there with tassels on.

PSN: stoxy242
Playing: CoD: WaW
Wanting: Street Fighter IV

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SHOUT OUTS: Patrick :: Pat :: Lagana :: Our Mums and Dads :: David Cage and Quantic Dream :: Brody Deegan and little Moses :: Turtle :: Heizy :: Cottee is a beast :: Capers Dance School ::



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The Helghast come a knockin'

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... And justice for all!



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The world keeps spinning



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- Limited Edition PSP
- Lost Boys DVD pack
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AND RECEIVE STAR WARS ROBOT CHICKEN ON DVD! PAGE 20!



Gaming's latest and greatest

2009: A VERY GOOD YEAR?

Next year's big guns form an orderly queue

2007, by all accounts, was an incredible year for gaming and 2008, thanks to the combined might of 2007's delays (*MGS4*, *GTA IV*) and a plethora of stellar Chrimbo releases, was also a complete and utter beast.

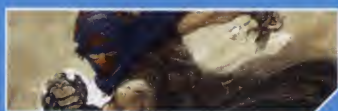
In comparison to both these monstrous feasts of game-age, 2009 was starting to look a bit anaemic in comparison but, thankfully, after watching the flurry of announcements and genital-melting trailers, we were left far more positive with regards to

2009's chance of standing up to the past two years of awesome.

And standing tall – the trifecta of exclusive genius: *God of War 3*, *Uncharted: Amongst Thieves* and *Gran Turismo 5*, with the latter finally being confirmed for a 2009 release.

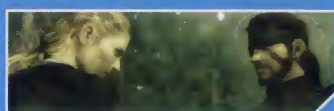
The future is most certainly bright.





12 Where to Now?

The *Prince of Persia* franchise has recently gone through a huge makeover – Where to Now? for the series, post-fancy schmancy cel-shading?



14 Top 10 Tear Jerking Moments

Every now and then a game comes along that hits you for six... in your heart. We count down the 10 most emotional moments in videogaming.



UNCHARTED: AMONG THIEVES SUPLISE!

We had an inkling, a small suspicion, that Sony would announce a sequel to the genre moulding *Uncharted* once the initial flurry of Sony Christmas releases had shipped. Diverting attention away from *Resistance 2*, *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift* and the like would have been a poor business decision, but now that these games have been released, Naughty Dog have been good enough to unveil our first glimpse of the sequel to the almighty *Uncharted*.

The most startling change is undoubtedly the scenery. Most expected Naughty Dog to retain the stark greens of the original's jungle environments, but from what we've seen thus far, it seems like *Uncharted: Among Thieves* is going to be set in a city environment. A teaser trailer showed Nathan Drake trudging through a freezing climate, sporting a five o'clock shadow, clutching a gold sceptre of some kind.

Apparently *Among Thieves* centres around Marco Polo's escapades in the same way that *Drake's Fortune* focused on Sir Francis Drake. The gameplay (we assume) will remain similar, but this time round we can apparently look forward to a free climbing mechanic, and balance was overly swayed towards the shooting mechanics, we're glad to see that a bit more variety is on the cards.

GOD OF WAR III

Oh... my... God

Finally, after the non-event that was the E3 trailer, we've finally had the chance to get a glimpse of in-game *God of War III* gameplay. It was a tiny glimpse, and a tad bit underwhelming in terms of length, but we were glad just to get a rough idea of how the game is going to look in motion. David Jaffe, who was at the helm of the original *God of War* claims to have seen parts of the game and stated that "it looks like a painting come to life – it's THAT good looking." We can't wait to see the footage that Mr Jaffe was shown.



GRAN TURISMO 5

Almost there...

While we haven't had the chance to really see, never mind play, *Gran Turismo 5*, we reckon that *Prologue*'s ridiculous audio visual fidelity will be matched and surpassed with *G75*.

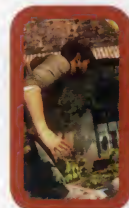
The major announcement this month is that *Gran Turismo 5*, after much speculation, has finally been penned in for a Christmas 2009 release. Some reports had *Gran Turismo 5* pegged for 2010 release, but the word coming out of Sony recently is to the contrary.

It's been a bloody long time coming, but we have a sneaking suspicion that the long wait will be more than worth it. We're expecting fully fledged damage models (especially after four years in development) and for the game to absolutely ransack pretty much every racer on the market.

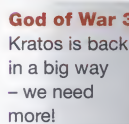


WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



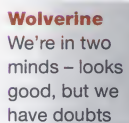
Uncharted: Among Thieves
Looks pretty incredible



God of War 3
Kratos is back in a big way – we need more!



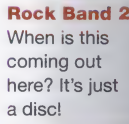
GT5
Due this Christmas – hopefully! Make it so...



Wolverine
We're in two minds – looks good, but we have doubts



home
If you can get it to bloody work it's alright



Rock Band 2
When is this coming out here? It's just a disc!



2.53 Firmware
A 30 minute download for Flash? Really?

IN SHORT...



DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

Was cancelled, then uncanceled – will now be released in Feb!



KILLZONE 2...

Was given a solid release date of Feb 27th in the US.



PEARL JAM

Their debut album is en route to *Rock Band* via the *Rock Band Store* – can't wait.



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
MARK SERRELS



GAMEPLAYER.COM.AU
LUKE REILLY

VS

Games are essentially time travel devices, and therefore we are all time travellers. Think about it – most games are either set in the future or the past, and most have an affinity for one of these possibilities. It just so happens that Mr Serrels, of OPS, enjoys games set in the future... whilst Mr Reilly of Gameplayer prefers going back in time.

FIGHT!

MARK: Alright Mr Reilly. I'm going to start this debate by conceding one point and one point only – dinosaurs are rad. They're big, scary, and every movie featuring those scaly bastards is awesome. But sadly, for you at least, they're the only cool thing about the past – period. Everything else is rubbish.

LUKE: Bah, what's so good about the future? Where are the hovercars and hoverboards we were convinced were only years away? Nowhere to be seen, that's where. I was promised robots, Mark. I was promised robots.

MARK: Come on Luke, don't resent the future just because it doesn't satisfy your vague idea of how it *should* be – do you think George Lucas gets pissed because chicks don't wear buns in their hair, and prepubescent kids are too busy crapping in their Huggies to participate in pod races? Do you think James Cameron gets stropky because our future most likely *won't* involve being hunted down by mechanical monstrosities engineered by Skynet? Of course not. You, my retro-phile chum, need to accept the future for what

it is – a radular setting for some of the world's best videogames.

LUKE: I guess it doesn't help your argument that *Star Wars* was set a long time ago (in a galaxy far, far away). Plus, according to T2, Skynet became self-aware at 2:14am EDT August 29, 1997. That would've been over a decade ago Serrels! Bah, I reckon games set in the future are soulless affairs stuffed with needless wank and queer gadgets. What would you pack in your pants? A purple ray gun that looks like a super-soaker or an M60?

MARK: Why do you want to know what I pack in my pants you weirdo? Only Mrs Serrels knows what I pack in my pants – and she's one satisfied lady (those text messages from the buff guy from Fitness First are just a coincidence – they're totally just friends). Anyway, back on topic – damn right I'd rather use an awesome purple ray gun and kill some awesome aliens. Are you trying to tell me that you'd rather use a creaky old blunderbuss? I bet you're one of those dudes that would rather milk a cow and churn some butter

instead of driving up to Woolworths and buying a tub of Western Star.

LUKE: Tsk tsk, I dig history dude, I'm not Amish. Pffft, aliens schmalien. At least the past has character. Aliens is all you've got homes – aliens and some yet-to-be-seen but consistently-promised robots. Meanwhile, we're living it up with ninjas, pirates, vikings, cowboys, gangsters and more. Best of all, the past keeps getting bigger. Remember *Call of Duty 4*, set in the present day and all? That was last year. Now it's set in the past. Recent history, but history nonetheless. Man, I can't think of too many of my favourite gaming moments that aren't set in the past. Cruising through Vice City to the strains of 'Billie Jean'? '80s. Storming Pointe du Hoc in *Call of Duty 2*? '40s. Launching over the hills of San Fran in *Driver*? '70s. Swooping in over la Drang Valley in *Battlefield Vietnam* with 'Fortunate Son' blazing through the speakers? '60s.

MARK: I will freely admit that music from the past was rad. And dinosaurs. But besides that the only thing the past has is 'sepia' – whoop-di-doodaa – that and

an overwhelming palette of shitty brown. I'm fully convinced that the only reason we went without colour TV until the 60s was because the past was so bloody colourless. And dusty – why does the past have so much bloody dust? Will someone get a Hoover up in here and clean the place up a bit – someone could get asthma. And as for living it up with vikings and the like; that's all well and good, but check this out – add 'space' to any one of those rad historical groups and they instantly become more awesome. 'space' ninjas, 'space' pirates, 'space' cowboys, 'space' vikings – way better than your regular vikings. Point being, ultimately, anything cool in the past is instantly, infinitely, cooler in the future and that is science fiction fact.

LUKE: But Michael Jackson was cooler when he was black.

MARK: And Miley Cyrus will be better post nervous breakdown ala Spears and Winehouse or at least when we can gawk at her without a shred of guilt.

LUKE: And fire her into space?

ON THE FORUMS

Chris Stead

All I want is to believe that I am in the world, no matter where it is.

Snake*AUS*

Games set in the future, as there are no limitations then.

Bagmup

Future... *Killzone 2* FTW. Shit I forgot about *God of War*!

Riftinducer

An earlier time period doesn't mean there isn't any creativity.

Glenn

The future has a lack of ideas and borrows from the past anyway...

FREE WITH A
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LittleBig
Planet™

HELLO
entirely in

IT

is

all

the

1

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4

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7



PlayStation
Network

G

Gaming experience
may change online

PLAY WITH EVERYTHING

You can make anything in LittleBigPlanet - invent characters, build games and share your creations online. You can even make your Sackboy look and act exactly how you want. Jump on to the PlayStation Network now and download a great range of new Sackboy costumes. In your favourite Street Fighter™, MotorStorm or Chimera costume, he'll really stand out from the crowd. LittleBigPlanet.com



PLAYSTATION 3

Where to now?

WHERE TO NOW?

The Prince with the greasy eyebrows and buff pectorals has conquered gaming several times and will shortly star on the screen in Jeremy Bruckheimer's latest cash vehicle. With all that exposure, we ask what's left for everyone's favourite wall runner.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: HAREM NIGHTS

EXPLAIN YOURSELF: He might be a prince, but he's no saint. When he's not scraping down inclines trying to save humanity, his arse is laying some fine Persian pipe.

THE STORY: The initially virginal Prince is hanging around the palace indulging in a bit of Persian curling when he suddenly awakens sexually and decides to philander through naked bathers like a scrub fire. It's a free-for-all flesh buffet until the Prince's ball-breaking betrothed – from an ex rival nation – rocks up and tries to tie our gigolo down...

HOW WILL IT PLAY?: A game that requires the Prince to use his acrobatic abilities to sneak into harems, it'll play like the blue son of *PoP* and *Splinter Cell*. The game's 'action' will be illustrated by Kratos-inspired mini games while a *Football Manager* interface will help with the Prince's, erm, medical complications.

PROBABILITY: Sure, it's a fresh idea that skirts around principles of human decency and may inspire the young into a slew of deviant behaviour that has serious repercussions for the rest of their lives, but *LittleBigPlanet* tried something new – and look at how well that's gone.

PRINCE OF IRAN: 2200 AD

EXPLAIN YOURSELF: Ancient Persia has been done to death. It's Ubisoft's responsibility to spruce up their baby by transporting the world into a future packed with techy visuals and skyscrapers. Additionally, magic is a complete load of guff so our young adventurer will have to trade in his mysterious, acrobatic skills for something entirely tenable, like robot appendages and anti-gravitational boots.

THE STORY: When an evil corporation starts buying up the huge buildings around the world to use for their online Peeping Tom website, our spritely Prince must leap into action, scaling walls and reaching new locations never seen before in order to rid all the buildings of filth.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?: Like *Prince of Persia* meets *Mercenaries 2*. After leaping, sliding and rocket packing to each building's critical points, the Prince must then radio in for his automated flying carpet to offload its huge arsenal of explosive materials.

PROBABILITY: We're not 100% sure, but a game featuring a raven-haired bloke from the Middle East demolishing buildings may have its critics in the upper echelons of Ubisoft's corporate think tank. Hmmm...

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SAYGON'S CHEST

EXPLAIN YOURSELF: In last month's review of *Prince of Persia* we introduced y'all to the Prince's number one fan, Saygon Village. He's a guy – not an actual village – and has gone to a great deal of trouble to create the Prince's armour and become the Prince.

THE STORY: Of course all that passion reminds us eerily of that flick *Single White Female*. The game would be similar. The genuine Prince of Persia would become good friends with Saygon Village by chance. That's until Saygon starts emulating the Prince's every move and funnelling hours into the bench press to emulate the famed Prince's bod. Weird.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?: It'd start off with the Prince and Saygon exploring their complex *Brokeback Mountain*-esque relationship before it breaks into a dead-set sequel to the new *Prince of Persia*.

PROBABILITY: We're not really sure why more developers don't start writing arbitrary fans into the plots of their games. Provided they're willing to try something new, this would surely – surely – be at the top of their 'wish' list.

THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE PRINCE OF PERSIA

EXPLAIN YOURSELF: Persians have been banging out something resembling music for thousands of years. With all that tradition, why not have an adventure game set in the ancient world and starring a wannabe music star?

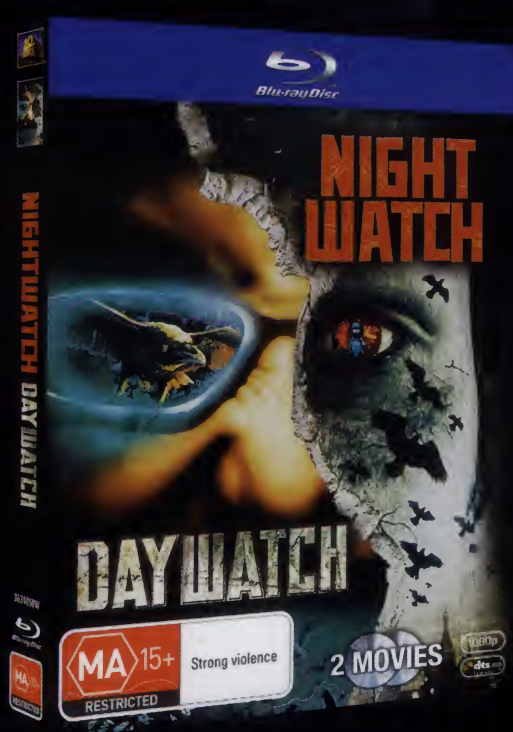
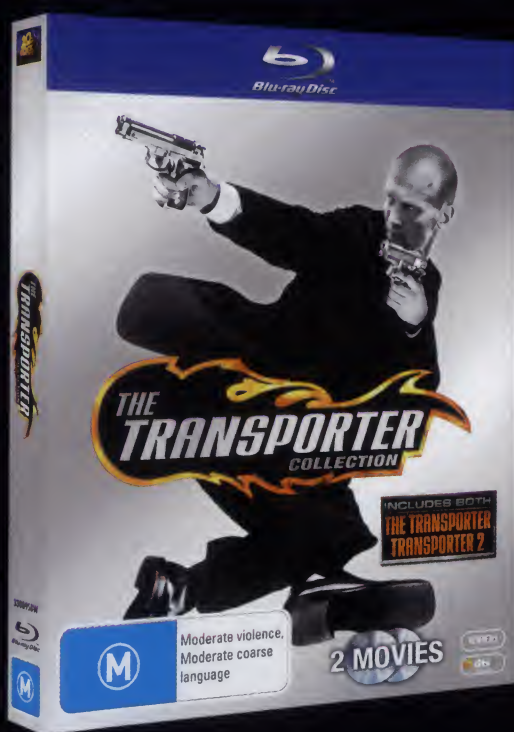
THE STORY: The Prince of Persia grows tired of his heroic exploits and instead seeks the fame and glory of a pop record contract. He quickly changes his name to a symbol, and becomes androgynous apart from a taped-on piece of facial hair that resembles a steamrolled hamster.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?: This'd be the first music adventure game. Players have to use the Prince's leaps to get around the land of Persia and start signing exposed cleavage and bottom cracks en masse. It leads up to players having to write, sing and release their first album – *Persian Rain*.

PROBABILITY: Get that freak Prince onboard to pimp this and who knows what might happen. Besides, music games are huge, the *Prince of Persia* franchise is massive – surely it's a no brainer to combine the two?



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TOP 10 TEAR JERKING

Crying. Normally a pursuit undertaken by your mum, while watching *The Bold and the Beautiful*, or Gwyneth Paltrow, post-Oscar. But the only thing that makes you cry is chopping onions – right? Wrong. Yes, we know your secret. You can't hide from us. You had something in both your eyes, right? Wrong. Just accept it – you're totally busted. Despite being in the minority, some games have the power to make us choke up a bit, and here they are – hosted in your bog-standard top 10 list – the most tear jerking moments in gaming history!

BEWARE SPOILERS AHEAD!



1

1 FINAL FANTASY VII AERIS

Yeah, yeah, yeah – we know. It's a bit obvious, and there's a large subset of macho, macho men who would rather rip out their own pubic hairs than play *Final Fantasy* – but the impact of the death of Aeris on a generation of gamers is undeniable. For many western gamers *FFVII* was their first foray into the bitter, teary world of the JRPG, and as such you'd have to have a heart carved out of solid lead to not be a bit upset when Aeris bit the proverbial bullet.

We... cried our teenage emo hearts out



2

2 METAL GEAR SOLID 3 KILLING THE BOSS

The Boss. She had to die. She made her choice. There was nothing we could do. That's what we keep telling ourselves... that's the only way we can make it through the day [sniff] the only way we can make it though the night [gulp]. Why Boss? [bawls] Why didn't you tell us? We could have worked it out! WHY!? Yep, killing the Boss was tough, made tougher by the fact that Kojima was cruel enough to make you pull the trigger yourself. [sniff].

We... sucked it up, and saluted with a tear in our eye



3

3 SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS AGRO FALLS

When animals die in any form of media, be it movie or videogame, it's at least three times sadder – that's just science. But when the animal in question dies trying to save your ungrateful arse in a final act of true unbiased altruism, that's when the tear ducts truly start flowing, and the stifled sobs become fully-fledged weeps of sorrow.

We... gave our disgusting dog a big smelly hug



6

6 METAL GEAR SOLID 4 REDEMPTION

MGS4's ending, or numerous false endings, had plenty of tear jerking moments. Otacon trying to explain to Sunny where Snake was, when he was blatantly weeks from death, was powerful, but nothing matched Snake's shaky resolve as he put a gun in his mouth and prepared to kill himself to save the rest of the world from the mutated FoxDie. Snake... SNAAAAAAAAAAAAAKE! Don't do it!

We... called up our grandad, indulged his stupid rambling stories, and ignored the stench of urine



7

7 CALL OF DUTY 4 GAZ GETS SHOT

Dragging your almost lifeless body through the ravaged streets after a nuclear strike, before eventually carking it, has jerked many a tear from stubborn eyes. But the final scene, where Gaz gets popped execution style, and Capt Price uses his last ounce of strength to push his pistol towards you before having CPR frantically performed upon his seemingly lifeless body is heart-hurtingly sad.

We... totally thought about joining the reserves for a couple of minutes, then changed our mind



8

8 THE DARKNESS GIRLFRIEND'S HEAD GOES BYE BYE

It's arguably more of a shock than a tear jerker (hence its placement further down the list), but no-one could deny the emotional impact of "Uncle" Paulie's brutal murder of Jackie's girlfriend Jenny, especially after the well-developed build up of their relationship in other areas of the game.

We... sat next to our girlfriend on the sofa, watched *Grey's Anatomy*, and didn't complain once

MOMENTS



4 FINAL FANTASY X FADE AWAY...

Yep, we know, another *Final Fantasy* tear jerker; but to be fair that series has jerked more tears than any other franchise we can think of – is there anything those games can't jerk? After taking care of Sin, lead character Tidus slowly fades away, having sacrificed his imaginary self to save his comrades. We challenge anyone, and the characters that inhabited it – to not shed a tear when Yuna runs through the ghostly image of Tidus fading away.

We... apologised to the wife for 60+ hours of neglect



5 GTA IV DWAYNE'S EMAIL

Post Dwayne's murder, it was bad enough to have that ratbag Playboy X call you up to express his disdain, but checking your email afterwards was the real kicker. Receiving a message from Dwayne telling you that you're his only friend, asking if you wanted to hang out some more. "Sorry Dwayne," Niko said to himself, but it hardly accounted for the huge sense of betrayal you felt.

We... gave money to the homeless dude on the corner at Bondi Junction – this is for you Dwayne



9 OKAMI ISSUN BELIEVES

For most of *Okami*, Issun is a super-annoying bug that most players would just love to slowly squash, and subsequently flush down the toilet. But, somehow, throughout the game his character slowly evolves into one of great importance, and when Amaterasu is slowly dying due to the fact that no-one believes in her, Issun makes a powerful speech that rouses everyone's latent belief, giving her the strength to finish the fight. Epic.

We... stopped flushing cockroaches down the toilet



10 HALF LIFE 2: EPISODE TWO ELI GETS MURKED

While many neglected to check out the awesome *Orange Box* in lieu of the fact that the game struggled technically on the PS3, we're still haunted by the death of the humble, noble Eli. After guiding you through so much of the narrative, watching this dude get killed is like watching a Nazi beat up Morgan Freeman with a clawhammer.

We... watched *The Shawshank Redemption*

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

EARLY 2009

-  **PS3**
Resident Evil 5
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
-  **PS3**
SKATE 2
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **PS3**
Bionic Commando
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
-  **PS3**
Silent Hill: Homecoming
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **PS3**
Killzone 2
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **PS3**
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS
-  **PS3**
Dark Void
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
-  **PS3**
HeiSt
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **PS3**
Street Fighter IV
GENRE: FIGHTER | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
-  **PS3**
Wolfenstein
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **PS3**
Red Faction: Guerrilla
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
-  **PS3**
SOCOM: Confrontation
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **PS3**
L.A. Noire
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
-  **PS3**
Wheelman
GENRE: RACER | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
-  **PS3**
World in Conflict: Soviet Assault
GENRE: STRATEGY | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **PS3**
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
-  **PS3**
Trivial Pursuit
GENRE: PARTY | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **PS3**
Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **PS3**
50 Cent: Blood on the Sand
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
-  **PS3**
Destroy all Humans: Path of the Furon
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
-  **PS3**
WWE Legends of Wrestlemania
GENRE: FIGHTER | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

IS NICE! HIGH FIVE!

The great Memumza from Bazra would like to vent some frustration, as well as give credit where it's due. Memumza bought *Resistance 2* the other day, and as Memumza sped home with his copy, unwrapped that sucka and popped it in black beauty's tray, Memumza got to thinking about the awesomeness of *R1*, and its multiplayer modes. Bam, then it was installed and ready to fire. Memumza snapped out of his self-induced nostalgia coma, and got into a multiplayer

game. Memumza searched through games frantically, only to find that his beloved *Insomniac* had failed to reissue him with his favourite type of online game. Yes, the one shot kill is gone.

Now Memumza won't bring testicular torture into this, because Memumza loves *Insomniac*'s games, and finds it hard to sling any criticism their way. Memumza just thinks developers need to include a multitude of options in ALL online shooters in the game setup. It's not hard to include, and caters to more users. Memumza for one, really didn't enjoy *Warhawk* as much as he would have had the 4,000 bullet kills been toned down substantially.

R2 is an awesome experience, and *Insomniac* still reign supreme, so don't get Memumza wrong and label him a whining ho burger. Memumza just thinks these things should be said.

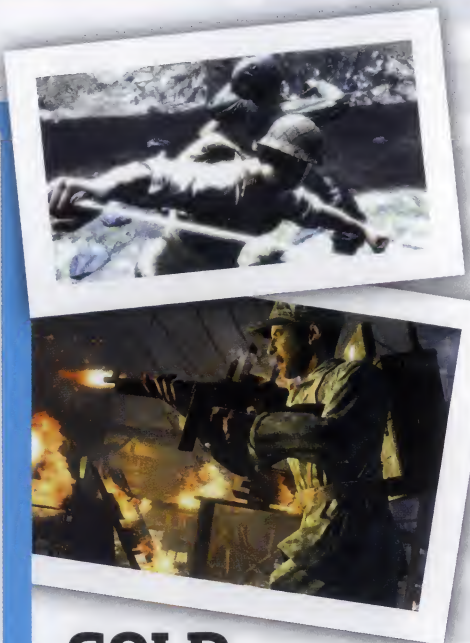
Memumza Bighor, via email

Hey 'Memumza' (aka Keiran Stibbard, yes we saw your real name on the email) some interesting points you make there, whilst referring to yourself in the third person. In our humble opinion the only person cool enough to speak about themselves in the third person without sounding like an utter tool is *The Rock* (the wrestling Rock, not the crappy movie star Rock). Anyways, we digress – yes the more options the better, especially when it comes to first person shooters. On the other hand, it sometimes works better from a competitive standpoint to have a grounded set of game rules. We could go either way on the issue.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS... KILLZONE 2!

The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of *Killzone 2* for their troubles – enjoy!



GOLD STANDARD

I'm writing in response to your review of *CoD: WaW* in your summer issue, giving it a gold award. No way. *BiA: Hell's Highway* was so much better for a WWII shooter. I haven't always been a fan of squad shooters, because your colleagues are generally bad at avoiding getting shot or using cover. *BiA: HH* worked brilliantly and the story was superb. Everything about the game worked so well, and it was disappointing when I finished the game because it was so well put together.

But then, I thought, *CoD: WaW* is out now so I can get stuck into that. I really enjoyed the *CoD* WWII series so I thought this would be awesome.

It sucked.

The AI was poor – at each stage, enemy and allied troops would keep coming to the exact same positions each time one was shot, until you advanced to the next stage.

This became tedious. Allied troops seemed impervious to 'friendly' flamethrower fire. There was no incentive to use cover well, plus the lack of being able to pop up over cover and fire was disappointing. I've probably finished about half of the game and I can't be bothered completing it. The settings may look impressive, but the gameplay stinks. So there!

Matt Bray, via email

Well, the correct answer here is that both are completely different games with different strengths and weaknesses. We do agree that *CoD: WaW* has issues transferred from other games in the franchise – the most annoying of which is undoubtedly the infinite respawns that repeat until the player beaks past an invisible trigger point. While we agree that it's lazy game design, we reckon that *Call of Duty*'s stellar cinematic presentation and explosive set-pieces more than make up for any other shortcomings the game might have.

CRISIS RESOLUTION

I have a bit of a problem. The main reason I bought a PS3 was to experience full HD movies and games, therefore I've been disappointed to see so few games supporting full 1080p. Wasn't the PS3 supposed to provide a quantum leap in gaming graphics? The only games that I'm aware of that output 1920x1080 are *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue*, *NBA 08* and *Wipeout HD*. If anyone here has experienced full HD you'll know what I'm on about - it's quite special. Not trying to sound like a stuck-up knob, but I'm running a 52" XBR Sony via a HDMI cable, through a Sony 7.2Ch home theatre (my friends are pouring money into cars - I am pouring money into my electronic goods). Blu-ray movies and music work fine, but games aren't what they could be. Is it too much to ask developers to make the extra effort? Because what's the point of using only 50 to 80% of the available processing power of the PS3? What's the go??

Bjarn

Thing is, at the moment, when it comes to streaming games of full 1080p, most games would have to sacrifice in other areas in performance - mainly in terms of texture work and frame-rate. And considering you really need a television bigger than 42" to actually see the difference between 720p and 1080p, and considering that full HD penetration is low, we reckon we'd rather have other areas strengthened. At this stage in the game, developers are probably right to sacrifice resolution.



➤ Ooh, it's purty!



➤ Do you come with the car?

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

When I first bought a PS3, I bought a couple of games with it. *Resistance: Fall of Man* blew me away, and *Motorstorm* was incredible. Visually it seemed like an amazing jump from the PS2. Fast forward a few months and we have incredible marvels like *GTA IV*, and the *Call of Duty* series. Great games, great graphics, great gameplay, great storylines. But lately, with my last three purchases, I'm almost scared to get new ones. I've had *Resistance 2* sitting on my desk for a couple of days now without putting the disc in, because I'm worried it won't match the original. Is it just me, or do some game developers seem to be going backwards? The new *Smackdown* game was... crud! The graphics were alright, but the story mode? I used to be able to take a created player through the season, and in earlier games, I could take two created players through. It doesn't have the charm of the earlier *WWE* games. *Need for Speed* is another one. I think most people can agree that *ProStreet* sucked, and I bought the new one in good faith that they wouldn't make that mistake again. I was wrong. It just feels to me that somewhere along the line some franchises have lost some steam.

Tim, via email

*We reckon this feeling is a combination of a couple of things. First off, when playing a next gen console for the first time, you're pretty much guaranteed to have your jaw superglued to the floor for a decent couple of months. Secondly, it's probably pretty fair to say that you're suffering from the ol' rose tinted glasses - we guarantee that if you compare *Resistance 2* to the original, side by side, the sequel will absolutely destroy it from a visual standpoint. So don't worry about being disappointed on that front.*

CUTTINGS

FOR THE LAST TIME!

Ok I'm guessing you guys and girls are getting sick of this question but I have to ask it, is there going to be a remake of *Final Fantasy VII*?

Darryl, via email

*Yes. We are getting a little sick of this question! But we understand the lust everyone has for a FFVII remake, so we'll answer the question one last time - we don't know! We hopes so, but are starting to get a little doubtful. It could be that Squeenix are waiting until the dust settles on *Final Fantasy XIII* before announcing it.*

IRRESISTABLE

What your thoughts are on *Resistance: Fall of Man* and *Resistance 2*. I have a particular interest in this series but I'm not sure which one to get.

Anonymous, via email

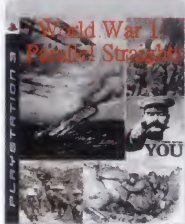
*We definitely reckon you should pick up *Resistance 2* over the first game, but don't be afraid of picking up the original to plug in the missing gaps in the main storyline. They're both great games.*

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games - on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

IT SHOULD BE A GAME!



WORLD WAR 1: PARALLEL STRAIGHTS

By Brendan Meharry

Play as any side in the conflict known as the Great War, and determine the outcome of the deadliest period in human history. Create your character, determine his place in the war and set about recreating or changing history as English, ANZAC, Austro-Hungarian or German troops. Different sides means different battles, as AI adapt and change to suit your tactics throughout. Play online in historically accurate maps, and watch what it was like to live through the bloodiest war in history. Plan your fights carefully, as changes in the field occur randomly and require immediate action. The hopes of the world rest on your shoulders. Good Luck.

The legendary feature, 'it should be a game', is back by popular demand! Naturally, since we just brought it back an' all, we haven't received that many entries as of yet. That's where you come in. Send us all your game ideas, funny, serious, insane or otherwise to ops@derwenthoward.com.au. If you happen to have any 'mad Photoshop skillz' then flex those muscles and send us some pics to go with it. It'll make your entry all the more sweet (and reduce Phill's legendary workload). Get cracking people!

COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!



SQUARED

Making the biggest splash when it comes to PSP games is Square Enix. In 2008 *Final Fantasy VII: Crisis Core* was one of the console's strongest titles. With the platinum release within the next few months, we can again expect to journey through gorgeous new handheld worlds.

One major winner will receive a limited edition *Crisis Core* PSP plus the game, and five runners up will score a copy of *Final Fantasy VII: Crisis Core*.

To win, head to www.gameplayer.com.au/competitions and tell us in 25 words or less what you like about Square Enix games.

GAMEPLAYER CODE WORD:
ENIX



COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!



THE WAY OF THE NINJA

Believe it when we say that, thanks to Madman, we are giving away triple the ninja fun as we load you up with *Naruto (Uncut) Collection 01 and 02* and *Naruto Ultimate Ninja Storm* on PS3. We have five packs to give away to those that are skilled in the artful ways of the ninja.

To win, head to www.gameplayer.com.au/competitions and tell us in 25 words or less what you would do with a nine-tailed demon fox.

GAMEPLAYER CODE WORD:
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TRIBAL BOYS

To celebrate the release of *Lost Boys 2* on DVD and Blu-ray this January, Warner Home Video and Official PlayStation Magazine are giving you the chance to win one of 18 *Lost Boys* packs, including the original film, *The Lost Boys*, and the sequel *Lost Boys 2: The Tribe*.

To win, head to www.gameplayer.com.au/competitions and tell us in 25 words or less which is your favourite Corey and why.

GAMEPLAYER CODE WORD:
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AVAILABLE:
JAN 7



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HOW TO ENTER

To enter Official PlayStation competitions log on to www.gameplayer.com.au/competitions or send your entries with the name of the competition CLEARLY marked to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions open 21/01/2009 and close 18/02/2009. Winners will be notified by mail and names displayed at www.gameplayer.com.au

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WORDS: VANESSA MORGAN

LET IT RAIN

When do videogames become more than just fight scenes surrounded by filler dialogue? David Cage questions what videogames could be with the making of *Heavy Rain*.

There are 'refinements' that you'd expect to discover in a prostitute's boudoir. Tools of the trade, mementos of past loves (maybe not loves) and iridescent 'mood' lighting, but perhaps we've been doing something wrong back here in Australia because the French have taken it to another level.

Making your way around a room laden with heavy silks, thick carpets and every available shade of purple, pink and blue, it's hard not to be distracted by the characteristics that make up this person's life. She likes to listen to music in the shower, she collects varieties of perfumes, sticks pictures and postcards to her walls

(many of religion icons) and reads *W* magazine.

Her past, present and perhaps future are all held within this room. Quantic Dream, the Paris-based company behind *Fahrenheit* have sculpted every aspect of her life to make her 'real'. But she is just one of over 70 characters that make up the cast of their new epic tale, *Heavy Rain*.

RAINMAKER

In true Quantic Dream fashion you shouldn't expect a flood of information about this title before reviews hit in late 2009. So in entering the Quantic Dream studio, an open plan office in the

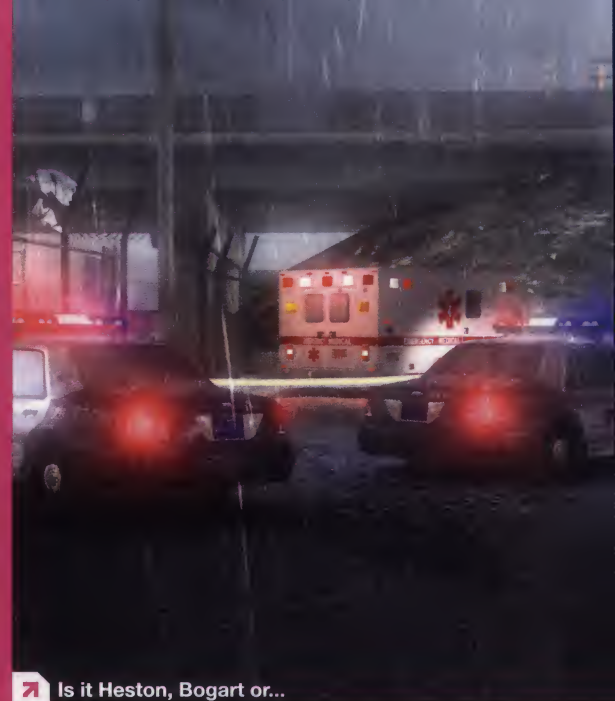
rougher area of Paris, which is broken up into divisions more by the visual style of what is or isn't stuck on the walls of the surrounding desks than by any other feature, journos from around the world were on the hunt for one person, David Cage.

A man of many talents, David Cage started Quantic Dream in 1997 to adapt one of his novels, *Omikron: The Nomad Soul* to a medium he was passionate about, videogames. As CEO, writer and director of the studio, he oversees the creation of the concepts, game design, and overall artistic direction of the studio's titles and is investing more than just money into the game.

Heavy Rain is a giant leap away

from the accepted structure of what a videogame is. Cage says, "the rules of gameplay have been the same for 20 years. The technology changes every three months but the writing and concepts are 20 years old. Is there a way we can change that and have new ways of thinking about interactivity, about interface, and about emotional involvement? Or do we have to stick to the old rules? I tend to think games look fantastic from a technical point of view but three, four, five hours in I'm like 'I've played this before'. It's the same game I played 15 years ago."

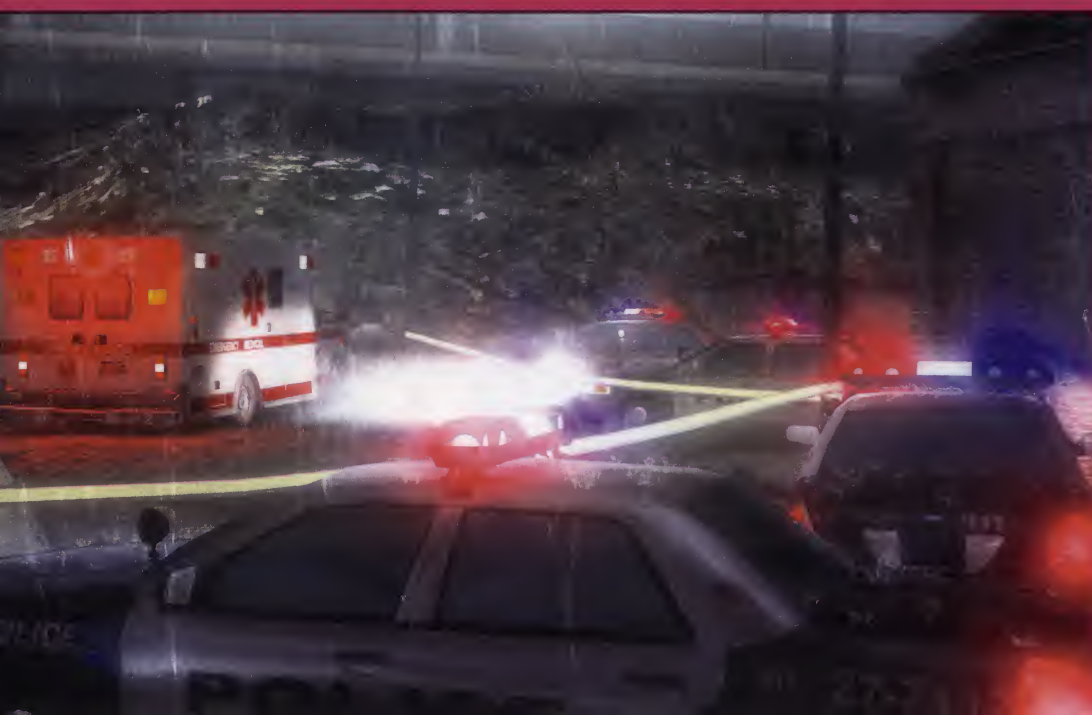
Renowned for being quoted as saying that *Uncharted* was like a porn film, something he clarifies saying



7 Is it Heston, Bogart or...



7 Could it be Jack's on the case?



"I was talking about the structure not the quality of the game. The structure gives a little bit of story, then a large sequence of action, then a little bit of story, then another large section of action. Both are done sequentially. In movies the story moves with the action. With *Heavy Rain* the action and story work together, you tell the story through acting. This is a challenge for us, and a challenge for our industry. There's something wrong with story telling in gaming, even when it's well done the interactivity doesn't work."

POUR PERFORMANCE

While pacing has always been of the utmost importance in gaming, it often relates to how many enemies are charging

into battle, when a boss battle hits or where you can pick up ammo or hit a save point, rather than our character's progress through the story. Gaming is action based, we run, jump, shoot, crouch and run some more, continuing the same actions over and over again in various patterns and sequences.

While *Fahrenheit* attracted attention amongst journalists and punters alike, it was often remarked that the first few hours of the game, before the game resorted to more traditional gameplay mechanics, were far more interesting due to the complex storyline.

But unlike that title, you will see no supernatural themes in *Heavy Rain*. You will not have to negotiate obstacles, solve puzzles or ramp up the difficulty to prove yourself to be 'hardcore'. *Heavy Rain's* core is about the experience

itself and how decisions you make have consequences. As demonstrated in the E3 and Leipzig demo, the game is about consequences, decisions and choice.

As the protagonist entered the taxidermist's house everything she did affected the story, resulting in the script changing. Moving objects in the kitchen will result in letting the antagonist know someone has been there, sending him on a mission to locate that person. Confronting him may end in death or the least a hefty fight, resulting in an experience tailored to the player. Cage hopes that "people will only play through it once and not try all the different branches because that way their story is unique. We want to make the gamer the actor and director."

Designed for an 'adult' audience, this difference comes from the approach

in this film noir thriller where the core essence of the piece is story.

Games of late have been criticised for long cutscenes. Square Enix are renowned for it, *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway* answered all at the end of the game with an extensive scene, and *Metal Gear Solid 4* has been referred to as a movie with extended gameplay elements.

So, how will Quantic Dream overcome that obstacle – will *Heavy Rain* be more than just an 'interactive movie'?

"With *Heavy Rain* I tend to say we're trying to stop making videogames. And some will say, "oh he wants to make movies". No, I want interactivity, but I just don't want to do the same thing that has been done for 20 years."

Focusing on real people and real stories, everything has been created from the ground up. As with the prostitute's



Welcome to Serrels' bedroom!



bedroom, detail is of the essence with over 2,000 pages of scripted dialogue (an average movie being around 120 pages) in order to capture not only a fractured story with multiple paths, but a variety of unique and individual characters.

SINGING IN THE RAIN

Charging into a poorly explored field, such as interactive storytelling, is dangerous. Ensuring everyone is on the same page has been made easier due to the existing team at Quantic Dream. Cage explains that "most of the team on *Heavy Rain* are from *Fahrenheit*, where they were working a little in the dark, as was I. They've been with us from beginning to end, they've read the reviews and we've been criticised

for some aspects of the game. Working on *Heavy Rain* they knew what I was expecting. We have people from different companies, different industries."

During the 15 months devoted to writing the script, over 6,000 pages were written, more than 40,000 words devoted to telling the story, including stage directions, characterisations and dialogue. A Hollywood scriptwriter was brought in and a movie script was even produced, to ensure a sense of achievement was given to characters, something that could prove lucrative for Sony.

Many of the environments were finished off by an outsourcing company based in Asia, in order to ensure that time was not wasted, and no mistakes were made, a bible was created with photos scouted from throughout Hollywood and the east coast of the US. Designers and

architects were brought in to capture the Californian vibe and help populate the various environments.

Built into this fractal structure is the emphasis on interactivity – while there will be climaxes and cliffhangers, the player must have a participating role in the decisions placed in front of him.

Emotionally charged, the idea is to have the player asking "what's next?" Moral choices play a large part in the outcome because, essentially, *Heavy Rain* is a new type of game, that almost requires a new genre. The game is basically an 'emotional simulator', and to pull this off scenes have been kept short, at maximum 20 minutes, with environments kept small but highly populated with objects.

Investments were made in proprietary graphics tools, with exclusive shader

systems being brought in to help give life to the detailed environments. In order to bring life to the game the studio has ensured that there is always movement within this moody noir piece, to ensure the drama was captured perfectly a global lighting system was abandoned in favour of a technique that requires each scene be set up like a movie and created shot by shot.

STORMING IN

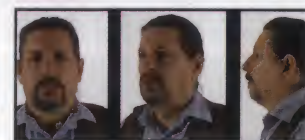
Ensuring that everyone is heading in the same direction and that "every single detail" is taken into account, the studio covering three floors is set up with its own research and development team to push the capabilities of the PlayStation 3 and, most importantly when it comes to the direction of the art style, is equipped with

Looks homely? Maybe you're casually ignoring the numerous stuffed corpses on the other side of the door



CREATING THE MAN

DESIGN



Emphasis and many man hours were put into finding the 70 plus actors that make up the *Heavy Rain* cast. Design boards with inspiration pictures, clothes references and 2D designs were created.

SCAN



The actors heads go through 3D.

WIRE



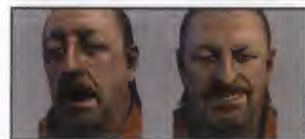
The underbelly of each character is created to give the structure.

MESH



A mesh was created presenting the delicate make up of a human face.


FINAL



The character was then inserted into the game with ambient lighting.

BIG AND STRONG

So they can fight off the
Chimeran Invasion!



PlayStation
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Strong violence and coarse language. Gaming experience may change online.

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PLAYSTATION®3



David Cage in action



Inside a brothel, not so exciting!



RAIN CHILD

When asked what character David Cage most admired in videogames, he responded with an unexpected reply. "I really like the little boy in *Ico* and I like him because we don't know who he is exactly, all we know is what happened to him and the way he behaves. He doesn't talk in the way we can understand but he says something and the characteristic is fantastic. He (Fumito Ueda) is a very rare real artist in this industry."



a motion capture studio.

With no detail about storylines or characters yet released, the emphasis has been on the striking visual look and strong realistic nature of the demos. Taking us into the motion capture studio for a demonstration, journalists were suited up in not particularly flattering black wetsuits, with what can only be described as ping pong balls attached to every area of their bodies.

Heavy Rain is the largest motion capture game ever created. While most movies would take nine to ten weeks to complete, this game has logged 170 days, around nine months, of motion capture, walking over 70 actors and stunt people through the process of capturing over 30,000 unique animations.

Throwing a few journalists into the room with a script made the process

look all too easy, until there were lines and actions not only to be memorised but repeated over and over again with accuracy, and then slotting in different paths that depended upon what *might* happen if the gamer makes unusual decisions. Lending a hint to what the story may be about, we played out a scene between a cop and someone who may or may not have done something wrong. While some conversations go peacefully and involve coffee and a sit down, others involve guns being pulled and the suspect or cop being shoved down on the table or up against the door. Props are used as nothing more than indicators made up of metal shapes instead of actual rooms.

It is more than just a look that is being captured by the motion capture. A human quality is born into each character. A older man worried about his line of questioning

is slower with more definite movements, his eyes flicker and lock on to objects. A young junkie jitters as he struggles to speak, he's agitated and disturbed and each of his scars, moles and wrinkles are on display as he moves through the atmospheric lighting, which creates strong shadows.

There is a human quality to the eyes because the expressions are real. The actors were told to forget it was a videogame, forget the exaggeration and just produce a real performance, casting being of the utmost importance to get the characters right first go.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

The final package, placing the motion

captured characters together with the detailed interiors and the lengthy twisted plot, results in an exclusive level of the game we could not be more eager for. Reminding us of all the classics of film noir, ala the likes of Hitchcock or David Lynch, the camera pans over a dark, wet street lit mostly by the lights of police and emergency vehicles. Plastic caught on the barb wire fence surrounding the quarry billows in the wind. A crime scene fills our view through a rusted fence, and objects dance along the floor being met by the flickering of police torches through the long grass. A crime scene is in full swing.

The depth and detail in the scene is just as jaw dropping as the initial image of the female face the game has become known for. Now there is only one thing to find out: how far are you prepared to go to save someone you love? 🐾

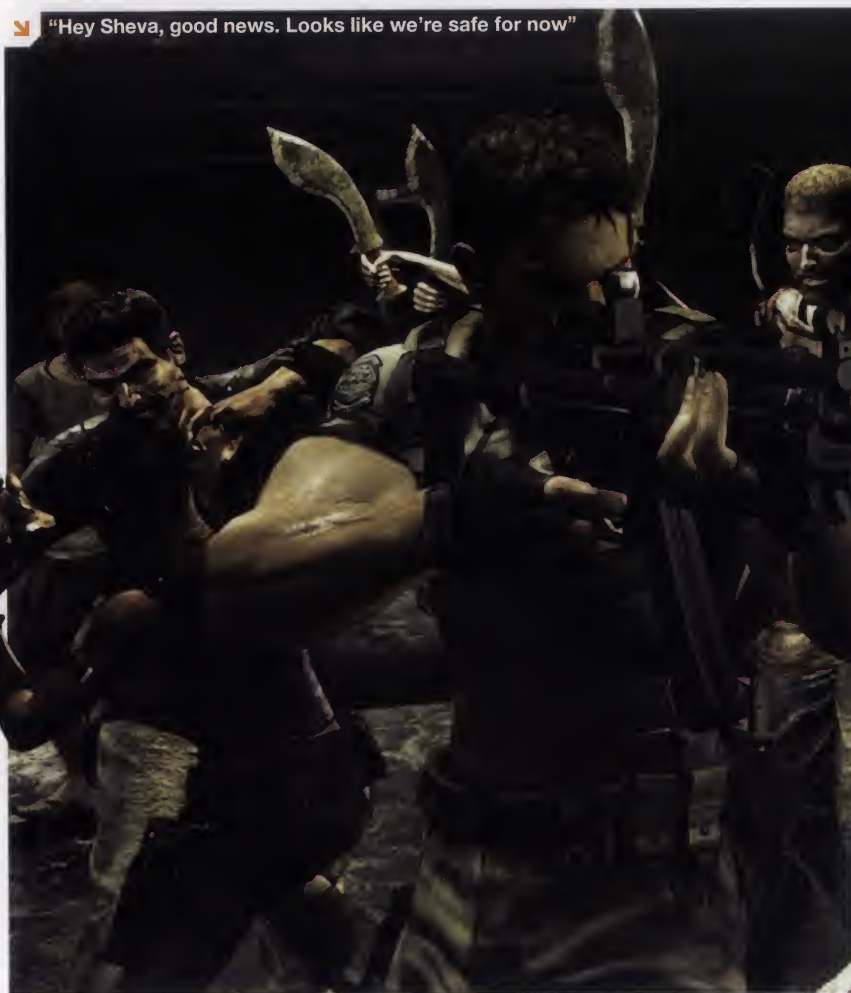
INCOMING

Exclusive looks at the very best



32 **inFamous**
Lightning bolts from your arms? You better believe it baby!

▶ "Hey Sheva, good news. Looks like we're safe for now"



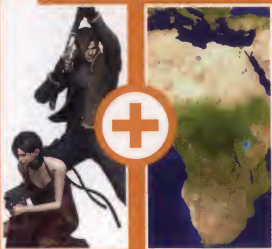
PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: EARLY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

RESIDENT EVIL 5

2009's game of the year?

IT'S LIKE...

▶ Resident Evil 4



Africa

With *Grand Theft Auto IV* and *Metal Gear Solid 4* coming and going, and *Gran Turismo 5* seemingly accelerating towards the vanishing point of Christmas 2009 (if it even makes that vague release date...) one gaming superpower has attached itself to our gaming calendars with gusto. We're talking, of course, about *Resident Evil 5*.

Ever since *Resident Evil 4* came out of nowhere to become arguably the greatest game of last generation, anticipation has been bubbling away for the fifth iteration. The redesigned mechanics, in addition to the startlingly incredible graphics, had gamers salivating, imagining what Capcom could do with next generation hardware.

But therein lies the problem – to a certain extent the incredible *Resident Evil 4* had invented next gen before the 360 and the PlayStation 3 even got started. Over the shoulder cameras, stop and pop shooting – all the game design stalwarts that have been echoed in titles like (most notably) *Gears of War* and *Uncharted* – all found their starting point with the mighty *Resident Evil 4*.

So where to now for the legendary franchise? Well, from what we've seen so far, *Resident Evil 5* looks set to take another mandatory next gen feature and push it to the next-next level (if that makes any sense). In short, this time round, Capcom are reinventing co-op gameplay.



34 Way of the Samurai 3
Swords, and Japanese history combine in this open world title.



35 Sacred 2: Fallen Angel
On the grind baby, all the time baby. *Sacred 2* hits consoles.




36 Tom Clancy's HAWX
Insert lame reference to Tom Cruise and/or Top Gun here.



38 Wheelman
Vin Diesel is bald once again, as he destroys Barcelona in the *Wheelman*.




How do they see where they're going – honestly! 



DEMO?! WHERE!

Believe it or not, there's actually a downloadable demo out there for *Resident Evil 5*. Sadly, however, it's only available in Japan at this precise moment. However, we reckon that the very existence of this demo is indicative that we'll be seeing it on the Australian PSN sooner rather than later.

The full nelson – the most brutal of all zombie wrestling holds 

INTRODUCING SHEVA

Despite the fact she dressed up as a schoolgirl and provided frequent pervalcious upskirt opportunities, fans still complained about *Resident Evil 4*'s Ashley – mostly due to the fact that she was about as useful as tits on a bull, and was the walking, talking epitome of your bog standard escort mission stretched too long and too far.

Following in the footsteps of *Prince of Persia*, *Resident Evil 5* has an AI-controlled secondary character that, if not being controlled by a secondary

player, still has the smarts and skills to drag your arse out of a bind every now and then.

But of course the game transforms itself when a second player (whether local or online) joins the party. "Big deal" you may say, "plenty of games support co-op, of up to four players, and *Resistance 2* allows for eight player co-op". To that we say yes, maybe so – but those games probably won't look anywhere near as good as *Resident Evil 5*, or provide the kind of co-op gameplay that *RE5* is promising.

RE5 co-op focuses on both players working together, sharing resources, with players separating in an attempt to achieve different mini goals that will, nonetheless,

help the two succeed. This is no half arsed, 'second dude spawning from the main dude' co-op – this is the real deal, and we have a feeling that *Resident Evil 5* will take this feature to new heights.

PAYING BACK THE FAVOUR


Resident Evil 4 pretty much pioneered the type of gameplay that *Gears of War* refined and prettied up for the 360, so it's only fair that Capcom return the favour – by 'borrowing' a feature from Epic's popular franchise.

Basically Capcom aren't shy about admitting that the new control system (designed to placate naysayers who hated

INCOMING

Resident Evil 5



Flaming zombies... with chainsaws. Damn, this just cranked up a notch 

the stationary control system of *RE4*) borrows from *Cliffy B's* instant classic, in fact the team actually call the new system the 'Gears' controls.

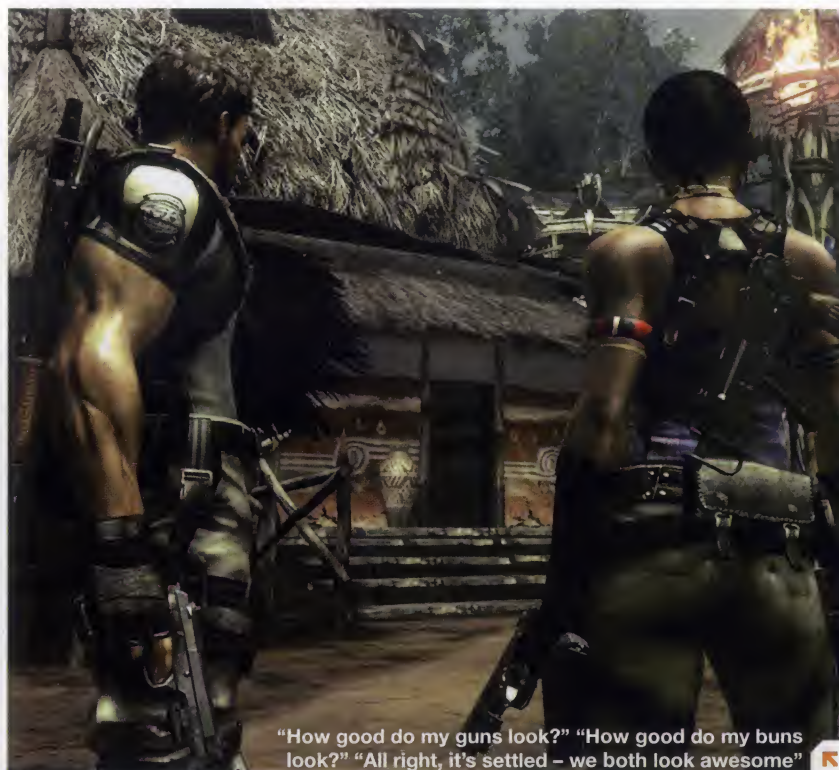
The 'Gears' controls are a well worked compromise – you can strafe while you're aiming, but as soon as you get to popping off some rounds the movement stops. This has been designed to preserve the tense feeling of claustrophobia and urgency that made *RE4* (and every other *RE* for that matter) such a pant-filling experience in the first place. Yes, there is a little more flexibility, but thankfully *Resident Evil* stays relatively true to its survival horror roots,

instead of dumbing itself down for the sake of progress.

We enjoyed the new controls muchly, and found that the added flexibility of the new system did a decent job of removing frustrations that players would have undoubtedly had to deal with, had they been forced to remain stationary whenever the gun was aimed. It has to be said that even the most rabid of *RE* fans would have found it difficult to justify this archaic system remaining.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

One of the strangest tangents that



Resident Evil 5 takes is obviously with regards to the environments. Whereas previous *REs* have always taken place in gloomy, dark, (sometimes) claustrophobic settings, the fifth iteration kicks you outside, eyes-a-squinting into the stark daylight, in an attempt to tap into a different type of terror.

As opposed to tapping into the 'haunted house', ambling zombie, horror aesthetic, *Resident Evil 5* borrows from the stark lighting, and super fast zombie-age seen in recent movies such as *28 Days Later* and the recent remake of *The Hills Have Eyes*. The game also borrows from

movies such as *Black Hawk Down* (which says as much about that movie's terribly racist portrayal of Africans as it does about *RE5* itself) by defining the dusty, stark desert environment as a new theatre of high-paced cerebral terror.

The incredible car chase scene that we were fortunate enough to see was a perfect example of this. Challenging *MGS4*'s latest benchmark in Act 3, flying through the African desert with a horde of hungry zombies on your tail is quite the adrenaline rush.

Could Capcom be raising the bar for action gaming across all formats like its

predecessor did all those years ago?

If what we've seen is anything to go by, the answer could quite possibly be yes. For our money, in terms of 'realistic' graphics, *Resident Evil 5* is one of the best looking games we've seen this generation. Taking *Resident Evil 5* into the stark sunlight in the African desert may have seemed like a step in a strange direction for the franchise, but we can't wait to see it taken to its logical conclusion.

This is one worth watching people, look for our final verdict on *Resident Evil 5* sooner rather than later. We can't wait for this one. **Mark Serrels**

'MAGIC' MOMENTS...

RESIDENT EVIL

The dogs. Those bloody dogs. Strolling up a seemingly harmless corridor, most players dropped a serious load in their strides as a group of rabid, zombie dogs came crashing through the windows.



RESIDENT EVIL 2

Mr X... smashing through a wall. A FRICKIN' WALL! Come on man – at least use a door, or a window. The last thing we expected was an attack through a solid brick wall.



RESIDENT EVIL 3

Nemesis. Possibly the most terrifying character in any *Resident Evil* game. This gruesome chap turns up unannounced and makes you wish he'd leave. Absolutely, positively terrifying.



RESIDENT EVIL 4

Man, so many moments – but no-one, absolutely no-one could forget the first time the potato sack guy came charging towards you before lopping your head off with a chainsaw.



WE SAY

↑ Looks amazing

↑ New co-op stylings

↓ Too similar to 4?

OPS IS...
Ambling



INCOMING

inFamous

SHOW OFF

Cole is also an "Urban Explorer", you know those dudes who jump off buildings and make you feel like a fat, lazy tool? Yep. You can run, jump and shoot lightning. Bloody show off.

IT'S LIKE...

Sandbox



Superheroes



7 "Something something dark side... something something... complete"



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: SUCKER PUNCH

INFAMOUS

Will you be a hero or a total douche-nozzle? The choice is YOURS!

The trailers for *inFamous* have been a tad underwhelming. Perhaps because the game isn't getting released until some time in 2009, or maybe, thanks to *Star Wars: TFU*, a bloke shooting lightning from his fingers is a little less exciting than it once was.

In terms of story, gameplay and the universe you occupy, however, things couldn't be further from the bloody galaxy far, far away. This is more a down and dirty adventure game, set in the sandbox environment of Empire City.

There aren't exactly huge sacks of information out there – but we looked, kicked a few heads and got some plot info.

OH, DO PLEASE GO ON...

The story follows a fellow named Cole. A typical Empire City chap until one day, coincidentally at the start of the game (who would have thought?!), a massive explosion turns six city bokes into a large, smoking crater. All that's left is said massive hole,

some bits of rubble and you – Cole.

Lips are tight regarding who, what or why the explosion was caused, but it leaves Cole a changed man. Not in the sense that he's going to sponsor a child or compose a country and western song about the explosion, but quite dramatically. Cole has 'electricity powers', but before he gets to use them for anything fun he passes out.

TWO WEEKS LATER...

Someone once said "waking up is hard to do"... actually that might have been "breaking up", but waking up is hard too. Especially when you pass out for an entire fortnight and when you get back things have gone skew-whiff in the big smoke.

The city has become a chaotic mix of gangs who, without the long arm of the law ready to slap them about the face vigorously, are getting up to all manner of tomfoolery. Sailorish language, talking about ladies' 'swimsuit areas' and killing other gangs for control of the city.

But wait, there's more good news coming your way: due to a plague that has infected many of Empire City's residents, the entire damn place is under quarantine.

IT CAN'T GET ANY WORSE THAN THAT, THOUGH, RIGHT?

This is sort of a good news/bad news situation. The good news? A DJ named 'The Voice of Survival' is talking about you. A lot. The bad news? He's revealed Cole is actually responsible for the explosion, thus making every Empire City lass and lad want to kick 11 fruit flavours of crap out of you.

The open nature of the game gives the player some choices. Should you become a hero? Use these new powers of yours to rescue folks who, thanks to you apparently, are now in peril.

Oh the delicious irony! HOHOHO!

Or do you just ignore the cries for help and tackle the bigger threats that

have manifested in the city? The choice is yours – and you're just a dude. You're not special (not in any way you know about anyway) you are, point-of-fact, just "an everyman". The whole point of the game seems to be 'let's see what happens when an ordinary dude gets the powers of a God'. It's an exciting idea. What if you woke up tomorrow and you could flatten a car with your electricity powers? Would you?

IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP OR IN THE MIDDLE OF A QUARANTINED CITY

Interestingly, Cole has some mates to help, and hinder, him along the way. There's Zeke – a conspiracy nut and survivalist who gets all poochy and jealous over Cole's powers and Cole's ex-girlfriend





IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD (AGAIN), BUT THIS TIME YOU HAVE POWERS

It's kind of a no-brainer. Take a sandbox environment and fill it with people, situations and antagonists and then go right ahead and give the protagonist (Cole) super powers.

As much as we love GTA IV, we reckon, done right, destroying some equally powerful baddie as you jump from dizzyingly high rooftop to dizzyingly high rooftop will be better than friggen Roman calling you for the 87th time that hour! No, I don't want to bowl with you, ya tubby, now give me super powers or bugger off!



Let there be light(ning)



— and med student, Trish. Trish doesn't really like Cole, but still helps him treat the injured. She's been dubbed "Lois Lane with syringes", so maybe Cole and Trish will find that a plague-ridden, quarantined city brings them back together.

Or not. Who cares?

It seems like a lot of the choices you make in this game actually have some gravitas. Rather

than, "should I wear my red or blue shirt?" actions have consequences.

SO, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Well, Cole can be a good hero, a realistic hero or just kind of a dick. Your powers evolve depending on what actions you take. But they're based in electricity. Zap your

So you think you can dance, fool? Check these jazz hands!

targets, create an electric shield, make 'sticky bombs' and fang them at your foes. There's even choice in the way you take out enemies. You can zap them directly, or blow up nearby generators. Be careful though, it's not all beer and kittens. You depend fairly heavily on electricity - but the massive explosion at the start took out a lot of generators. So fighting a foe in a blackout is a hell of a lot harder.

Also, if you've chosen to be a dick — the people of Empire City will be far less inclined to help you. If you've been a good hero, however, civilians will lend a hand.

SO IS IT MORE SANDBOX OR KITTY LITTER?

Honestly? Hard to make the call at this stage. We all got terribly excited about *Prototype* a while back so to be quite frank the 'TBA 2009' fills us with apprehension. Having said that, the idea is a good one. In fact we've been whingeing about a superhero sandbox game for ages [No, Anthony, YOU have, ya big geek - Ed] and this could be it. **Anthony O'Connor**

WE SAY

- ↑ Apocalyptic setting
- ↑ Choices you make matter
- ↓ When's it coming out?

OPS IS...
in electric dreams

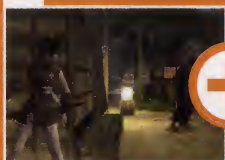


INCOMING

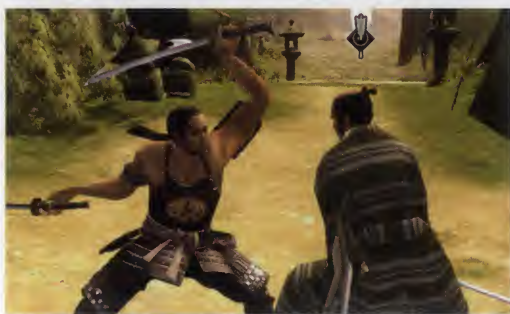
Way of the Samurai 3

IT'S LIKE...

Tenchu



GTA IV



▶ The dude on the right, he's oblivious and partying down – righteous

▶ "This is what I use to dice my lettuce" "It's a bit excessive, don't you think?" "Maybe"



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: TBA | DEVELOPER: ACQUIRE

WAY OF THE SAMURAI 3

Hit by the ugly tree?

Samurai and ninjas, *Shinobi* and *Tenchu*: why do games that choose to explore the lives of these historical Japanese figures generally make for such pulsating entertainment? On the 'samurai cool' scale, this game is somewhere around the halfway point between the disastrous *Genji* (that horrible PS3 launch game, remember?) and the legendarily good *Samurai Shodown II*.

This series began as a no-frills samurai simulator on the PS2. Its strengths were the freedom of movement and expression afforded to the player (in other words, you did pretty much as you liked – often with messy consequences), as well as the vast array of swords it permitted you to use.

On the other hand, it didn't look very hot. The PS3 version continues all of

these trends, including the one about not looking too hot. Compared with the similarly historical *Ryu Ga Gotoku: Kenzan!* (a fine PS3 side-story in SEGA's *Yakuza* series), *Way of the Samurai 3* looks surprisingly poor, like its development budget was cut midway through the project.

Still, there are 100 weapons to use here. Plus, the freedom of movement remains, and that's where *Way of the Samurai 3* is most likely to succeed. There are multiple endings to work towards, so it could be worth playing through a few times.

This instalment also introduces a new 'Sudden State' system, which enables you to draw your sword at virtually any point in the game – even in situations where you'd ordinarily be expected to play the diplomacy card and keep on talking. The payoff is that

every time you choose to take action with a katana, it supposedly affects the whole chain of events running throughout the game. Hence the multiple endings.

Unfortunately, *Way of the Samurai 3* is at present stuck in Japan. Considering the first two games received English translations it seems likely that this one will too, but nothing is confirmed at the moment. If you're a fan of the series then be reassured that there's an extremely solid chance this will be available in Australian stores at some point in the very near future.

Some wise, super smart Aussie distributor should most definitely pick this up and push it as a budget-friendly release, because at that sort of level it would be pretty appealing. **Jonti Davies**

FREEDOM!

Way of the Samurai 3 is all about freedom. Kill the right people at the right times and you can earn the respect of entire clans, working your way up the samurai career ladder until people start calling you 'Boss-san', and bowing as you walk down the street. It's not like everything you do has a consequence in how the game unfolds (paying your respects to dead ancestors has no effect whatsoever), but it's still quite rare to find a Japanese game with such an open-ended world.

WE SAY

- ↑ History comes alive!
- ↑ Open ended world
- ↓ Looks rough

OPS IS...
Benevolently brutal



INCOMING

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel



7 Necrosis at its finest!

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: MARCH 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT | DEVELOPER: ASCARON

SACRED 2: FALLEN ANGEL

Diablo-style fantasy action is finally coming to the PS3

Set in a sprawling fantasy world filled with warring factions, quests, monsters, dungeons, secrets and loot, at first glance *Sacred 2* might appear to be an *Oblivion*-clone in the vein of *Two Worlds*. This is not the case — it's your standard top-down roaming hack-and-slash RPG.

Yes, *Sacred 2* is a descendant of *Nethack* and *Diablo* — hours and hours of repetitive goblin bonking and kobold piercing, with an occasional trip to the haberdashers for a fresh set of leather pants. The reason you endure this is because, like the unfortunates glued to the pokie machines, you are compelled.

At least, you are if you're German. Comparing *Sacred* to *Diablo* is like comparing *The Settlers* to *Rise of Nations*. The micromanagement required sets the cultural barriers high.

But what worries us is not the quirkiness or the grinding — they're all part of the appeal, along with

the overly-glossy 3D CGI and the tawdry mithril bikinis. No, the main concern with *Sacred 2* is the integrity of the code. The PS3 has a patchy record for adaptations of PC games, and *Sacred 2* was buggy to begin with.

Assuming the glitches of the PC original can be patched up for the PS3 release, gamers will be treated to a slightly skewed take on the fantasy experience. *Sacred 2* is set in the 'steampunk' world of Ancaria, with laser-spitting brassy cyborgs amongst the wizards and warriors of the six playable character classes.

Gameplay is spread across a streaming game world significantly larger than the one in *Oblivion*. There are buildings above ground and dungeons below, but most of the action takes place over the rolling phantasmagorical countryside. Quick travel is a necessity in such an environment, and has thankfully been included. There are reportedly over 500 optional sub-quests; further variety stems from two main quests you can choose from when starting out: to

save the world, or to destroy it.

Beyond moving through maps and repeatedly striking fantasy monsters, the game's depth lies in managing your protective combat spells — your 'buffs' — while simultaneously bringing the hurt.

There's also co-op multiplayer for two players offline, or up to four over PSN. Sure, it's closer to *Gauntlet* than *WoW*, but multiplayer never goes astray.

It's rough-and-ready, sure, but at least *Sacred 2* is coming to stores very soon. *World of Warcraft* and *Diablo III* have as much chance of launching on the PS3 as *Fable II*.

If you're super-eager to try it out for yourself, there's a 1.7 gig demo available for the PC version, though if you've ever played a *Diablo* clone you know what to expect. This game doesn't exactly break new ground.

For all its faults, *Sacred 2* is our first and last best hope for a decent Roguelike goblin-killing spree. Let's hope Ascaron sorted out the bugs. **James Cotte**

IT'S LIKE...

DIABLO



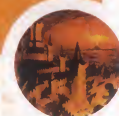
TRIPPING THE RIFT



WE SAY

- Hours of hack and slash action
- Graphics look dated
- Buggy as hell

OPS IS...
walking into Mordor



VERY BRUTAL

We thought that the days of videogames made for local markets were long gone, but nobody seems to have told the Germans. This German-style RPG with meticulous, anal detail boasts a soundtrack from Blind Guardian, a speed metal group that is apparently very, very big in Germany. If you like some Krautrock with your Krautware, then *Sacred 2* is a dream come true.



INCOMING

Tom Clancy's HAWX

IT'S LIKE...

Top Gun



Area 88



HAWX – it's like google maps... times a MILLION

PS3 GENRE: FLIGHT | RELEASE: EARLY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT

TOM CLANCY'S HAWX

In the future, top guns will get paid top dollar

We recently had the chance to take part in a four-player hands-on co-op play-test of Tom Clancy's HAWX, and from what we've seen it's already sizing up to be the hottest combat flight sim of this generation. HAWX delivers a fairly realistic simulation of modern air combat, yet the play experience is propelled forward by the twin afterburners of accessible presentation and a gloriously outlandish plot.

Mission objectives are divided into air superiority, ground attack, and mixtures of both; players have the freedom to choose a jet and weapons load-out to suit. For our first sortie we were off in the Middle East, protecting some precious oil

refineries from dozens of invading tanks. The urgency of the situation must be balanced with the need for a methodical approach; gently swinging your plane around to line up an optimal window on the carnage. You'll need more than a skerrick of patience.

Fortunately, the interface does half the work for you. When locked in to a dogfight, for instance, you can press a button to summon an arcing tube of blue triangles showing how to snake around and get on the bogey's six. You don't have to judge for yourself how best to lead your cannon fire, either. The HUD will show a targeting circle in front of any plane you're twisting around to blast.

Likewise, when you've got some cluster bombs ready to drop, a wire-frame rectangle will be projected on the ground ahead showing where all your little bomblets will fall.

The battles themselves give a great impression of full-scale conventional warfare. The next map we tried out was Rio de Janeiro, the perfect showcase for Ubisoft's use of GeoEye satellite imaging. The terrain emulation isn't perfect – get close enough and you can see that not all the buildings pop out into 3D – but it's good enough to fool your peripheral vision when you're concentrating on blasting scores of jets, ships, landing craft and tanks.



The third level we checked out hit an off note. Hunting for SAM sites on a tropical island chain, the game mechanics for staying out of radar range seemed a little whack. But the last level made up for it all: a desperate mission to protect Air Force One from dozens upon dozens of enemy jets. Proving you're a Top Gun is one thing, but learning that you're a bad enough dude to rescue the President is something else.

HAWX is a fun game, but it has a few flaws. Glaring ones. For some inscrutable Romanian reason, the call-



signs are limited to five letters. FIVE letters. That's as many as five ones. And that's terrible. You can fit Goose in, sure. But for our play-test Iceman had to be squashed into Icemn. And Maverick? Fuhgeddaboutit.

The setting is also a little bland. We know, we know – the aerospace companies only let games developers use their jets in these games if the conflicts are completely made up. Remember the stink that Hugo Chavez kicked up when he learned that *Mercenaries 2* was set in Venezuela? It was almost as big as the stink that gamers kicked up when they learned that *Mercenaries 2* wasn't very good.

The *Ace Combat* games get around that little problem by setting everything on a fictitious Earth with made-up countries fighting for contrived reasons. Ubisoft has tried to solve it by setting the conflict between made-up private military companies, the same sort of shady mercenary groups we saw in *Metal Gear Solid 4*.

Naturally, Kojima threw in lots of wacky stuff to keep *MGS4* interesting: crotch-grabbing, Otacon's Lolita complex, a monkey that wears trousers, etc. About the zaniest feature of *HAWX* is that one of the members of your squadron is from the American South, and a little thick. He always asks the

stupid questions, so the other characters can explain what's going on. It's effective exposition, but it doesn't make the experience any less sterile than a satellite photo.

But enough bitching – were we to continue, you might get the impression this is a bad game. Quite the opposite! Once we got the hang of the controls (it helps if you lock on before firing your missiles, for instance) we were totally rapt. Online co-op is going to rule.

It's niche, but *HAWX* is the combat flight sim that PS3 gamers have been waiting for. Just keep your call-signs to five letters, and you're golden. Or goldn. You get the idea. **James Cottee**

PIE IN THE SKY

Realism and Tom Clancy's *HAWX* have an awkward relationship. On the one hand, the reliability of air-to-air missiles is dead on, in that at least half the time they miss. On the other hand, you can carry dozens and dozens of them on your jet; far more than you ever could in real life. The number of enemies you face is inflated to match. It's preposterous, sure, but it's for a good cause: racking up kill after kill keeps the game interesting.



WE SAY

- ↑ Realistic and accessible
- ↑ Glorious graphics
- ↓ A little sterile

OPS IS...
Feeling the need



INCOMING

Wheelman



Too many donuts will do things to a man

IT'S LIKE...

Spy Hunter



Stranglehold



\$100,000

Midway, the company behind *Wheelman*, recently changed hands for a mere USD \$100,000. Valued at an estimated USD \$30 million, an 87 per cent stake was bought by a private investor who will assume Midway's secured and unsecured debts.

PS3 DEVELOPER: TIGON/MIDWAY NEWCASTLE | DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT | RELEASE: EARLY 2009 | GENRE: ACTION

WHEELMAN

"Yo dawg, I heard you like cars..."

Rockstar *doesn't* have a monopoly on open-world driving/action games. Other developers have followed the GTA formula, with success levels varying from the meh (*True Crime*) through to the quite alright (*Saints Row*). *Wheelman* is the latest entrant in this burgeoning genre, and revolves around a fast and furiously fading star.

The style of play fits into the rapidly growing sub-genre of celebrity vanity projects (*Blood on the Sand*, et al). The action is straightforward; with assisted targeting and regenerating health, the digitally-reproduced hero is high-on indestructible.

Vin Diesel IS Milo Burik, a transporter who's come out of retirement to infiltrate the Spanish underworld. To that end, he must tool around Barcelona in a variety of fast cars, pulling off bullet time moves powered by reckless behaviour.

Everything is EXTREME. Loads of games have carjacking, but how many let you carjack a moving car from another moving car? 'Airjacking' is but one of *Wheelman's*

innovations.

It also differs from the likes of *Grand Theft Auto* and *Saints Row* in that the focus of vehicular confrontations is not to evade your pursuers, but to run them off the road. The left stick steers, and the right one initiates 'vehicle melee' – destruction derby antics that leave a flurry of debris and explosions in their wake.

While the city is immense, its road layout has been greatly simplified, lengthening the long, uninterrupted stretches between intersections – it looks and feels like old school *Driver* with a respray.

The critical path spans 31 missions, but there are no fewer than 105 optional missions to pad out the experience. Which missions you get to access depends on which of the three gangs you side with and which you choose to fight, thanks to a GTA style alliance system.

This may seem restrictive, but actually introduces a fair amount of variety; the rival gangs spread around the city don't just vary in their colour schemes, but also in their tactics; each has their own favourite model of vehicles and machineguns.

Another key difference: licensed vehicles. Real-world American muscle

cars are available for you to drive, smash, and crash. This could prove to be a built-in anachronism, since at the rate the 'Big Three' US automakers are going, they all could be out of business by the time *Wheelman* goes on sale.

Developer Tigon Studios has a solid track record with *Escape From Butcher Bay*. Being owned by Mr Diesel, the studio also has a vested interest in making him look good. Co-developer Midway Studios Newcastle has a more patchy record. Whether this turns out to be *Stranglehold* with cars or *Driver 3* with strippers remains to be seen, but we have confidence in this title. **James Cottee**

WE SAY

Fast-paced, accessible.

They made *Butcher Bay*

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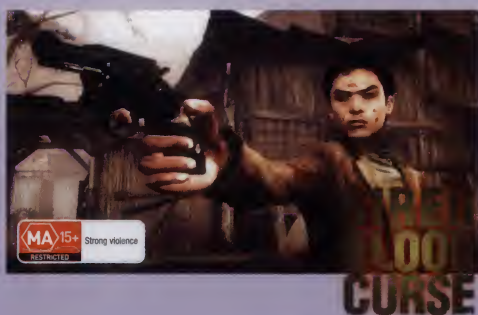
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PLAYSTATION 3

If you build it...

THE

WORLD OF COLOUR!

By Geosautus



Elegant level, solid mechanics and a slick, gorgeous art design. Smartly provides variations on a single thematic element: colour.

Rating: ★★★★★

IF YOU BUILD IT... WE WILL COME!

We separate the gold from the guff in *LittleBigPlanet's* user created levels

So you've bought *LittleBigPlanet*, you've dressed up your Sackboy and made him look like a super rad lion-man of sorts, you've called over your missus/husband/mate/girlfriend/random hobo off the street and had shiny-happy-hug-fuelled times playing through the main quest together. The game has enriched your life, brought you closer together with that special someone, and injected sunshine directly into your coarse veins. In short, you've had a helluva good time with *LBP*... offline.

But now it's time to venture forth into the realm of the world wide web

and brave the onslaught of *LBP's* user levels – a veritable hive of scum and villainy by any measure. And to be perfectly honest, it appears that Media Molecule hasn't done a *great* job of separating the wheat from the chaff when it comes to these levels – hence the reason for this feature. We've spent a solid amount of time online trawling through the good, the bad, and the incredible – and have come out unscathed on the other side.

Here is the end result: the OPS guide to *LittleBigPlanet's* online stramach – enjoy!

HAUNTED MANSION

By Geosautus



Someone hire this guy quick smart (he also did *World of Colour!*). *Haunted Mansion* integrates a word puzzle (that we're too stupid to solve) into a fun little level.

Rating: ★★★★★

BIG ONES

Thanks to some flawed design on Media Molecule's part, the most popular levels aren't necessarily the best ones – but there are some moments of brilliance in the 'cool levels' section that have absolutely, positively, earned their place in the top tier. Here are some of our favourites.

SACKOUTTE 2 SKYGOOSE'S DILEMMA

By *Luckett_X*



Featuring a startling silhouette art style, and imaginative level design, this level is easy on the eye and fun to play. It also has a slickly presented boss battle to finish.

Rating: ★★★★★

LIBIDIUS

By *RRR30000*



Mind bogglingly ingenious. Defines the creativity we'd hoped to see in *LBP*, turning a platformer into an old school side-scrolling shooter.

Rating: ★★★★★

THE AZURE PALACE

By *Gevurah22*



Replicates the underwater levels often found in platformers via the clever use of jetpacks. Looks, well... looked, fantastic.

Rating: ★★★★★

GOING UNDERGROUND



This is probably the most important section of this feature. With *LBP* we salute Media Molecule for what is undoubtedly a tremendous achievement, but we have issues with a system that buries so many incredible levels inside its rusty online innards. But we went a-diggin' in an attempt to find some of the best user created levels you've *never* played. Please check these out, and heart them if you enjoyed them – if we want the *LBP* community to flourish we have to reward great designers. Have a play at some of these and spread the love.

STEAMPUNK! CLOCKWORK

By *Magnum_Wolf*



This level is harder than a coffin nail, yet remains utterly compulsive. Featuring plenty of mechanics, this is one for the hardcore only.

Rating: ★★★★★☆

SPROESSER1

By *Sproesser*



A majestic level that genuinely could stand up next to the Media Molecule originals with pride. Featuring some insanely innovative vehicular sections that put all those crappy rocket levels to shame, this is a true masterpiece that everyone should try out at least once – this is truly one of our favourites.

Rating: ★★★★★★

VERTICAL VELOCITY

By dvader654

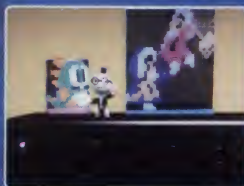


A cracking, in-depth, vertical stramach, this will appeal to those that enjoy vertigo-inducing heights and a real, old fashioned ball-busting challenge. Featuring a sprawling non-linear design and some truly off-the-wall flights of fancy, *Vertical Velocity* is a real gem.

Rating: ★★★★★

LIVINGROOM OF DOOM

By Mike Protagonist



This is a gorgeous effort, a real cut above the rest visually. It's a short level, and not necessarily an ingenious one, but it's worth playing just to see the *Battlestar Galactica* DVDs piled up on the shelf, and the LCD TV. A very clever, well executed level.

Rating: ★★★★★

MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN

By Korghano



We really dig the subtle lighting in this level – it's tough to see what's coming next, and this really forces you to plod through one step at a time. *Midnight in the Garden* is one of the most beautiful user-created levels ever, and benefits from some of the best pacing we've seen thus far.

Rating: ★★★★★

OUTSIDE THE BOX

These are the levels that refuse to be bound by traditional aesthetics, and instead move in unique, yet traditional directions...



Little Big Pinball

By TRDeadbeat



File this one under 'good idea in theory, doesn't quite work in practice'. The

pinball machine works well, but isn't really that much fun...

Rating: ★★★★★

LittleBig Basketball

By MRHROMAN24



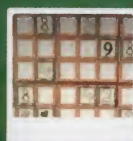
This supremely simple basketball game, complete with jetpacks, is

perfect for two players – tap ⊗ for extra speed!

Rating: ★★★★★

LittleBig Sudoku

By fadetoone



Even if you hate the Sudoku craze, you can't help but be amazed by how well

designed this level is – it even contains expertly integrated instructions on how to play.

Rating: ★★★★★

If you build it...

GUILTY PLEASURES

Subverting the intricate, ingenious levels doing the rounds at the bottom of the *LBP* playpile, these guilty pleasures are repugnant, but we still find ourselves playing them...



World's Fastest Sackboy

By MRH3ROMAN24



The user-created levels are absolutely plagued with these simple, jet-powered,

cheap arse vehicle levels, but the fun of grabbing on before being launched into orbit is fun.

Rating: ★★★★★

7 Trophies

By LuciferEx



The absolute worst of the worst. Sure, you receive seven trophies for participating

in this points fest, but what do you lose? A significant portion of your very soul, that's what. Alright, fine, we played it! What do you want from us?!

Rating: ★★★★★

Crazy Coaster

By Wuffi



Being honest, this could be categorised as a bog standard vehicle jet level, but it's

actually pretty well designed, with some clever loop the loops and such like. Better than most... we guess.

Rating: ★★★★★

When we spoke to Media Molecule, prior to the game's release, the team had an inkling that users would try to create replicas of their favourite videogames and movies – and they weren't half wrong. The real surprise, however, is just how well some of them actually turned out!



REALITY

ICO

By Mushroom_Samba



Of all the remakes we've played thus far, this is by far the most intricate and well-designed of the lot. Not only does it mimic the stark art and atmosphere of *ICO*, but it brilliantly replicates the puzzle mechanics. In the end it manages to be almost as heartbreaking as the original masterpiece.

Rating: ★★★★★

BITES

MIRROR'S EDGE

By *EVOLUTION7354*



It's not necessarily that much fun to play, but this level has really nailed the unique, stark aesthetics of *Mirror's Edge* in this smart remake. It really is a well done, shrunken version of the original.

Rating: ★★★★★

BACK TO THE FUTURE

By *AsystoleUk*



We don't know why we like this – we just do. At base it's a simple vehicle/jet level, but we love the bric-a-brac design of the DeLorean and the lightning section. In short, this level put a smile on our face.

Rating: ★★★★★

GLADIATORS

By *ManchesterMan2*

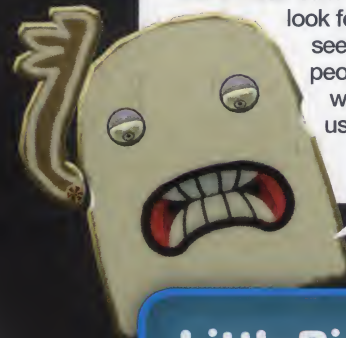


This basically mimics the final stage in that archaic TV show *American Gladiators*, and is brilliant with two players. It's simple, but perfectly designed – personally our favourite part is the grip section, which makes perfect use of *LBP*'s great control system.

Rating: ★★★★★

GENIUS!

This section is dedicated to the ideas men. The creators who, instead of making levels, per se, have spent time creating objects that others can use in their own levels. We look forward to seeing what people create with these user-created tools.



LittleBig Calculator

By *Upsilonandre*



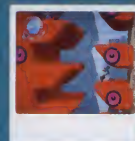
This 'level' exemplifies the kind of ingenuity we hope spreads throughout

the *LBP* community. Building a calculator from absolute scratch is an insane achievement.

Rating: ★★★★★

Music 1.0

By *MonkeyPeaches*



This effort is a true rarity: a level that manages to simultaneously innovate and

provide new material for other creators (in the form of an intricate music making machine), whilst still managing to work as a well designed, functional level.

Rating: ★★★★★

Infinite Lives

By *Clipper_US*



So simple and almost obvious. An infinite lives checkpoint mechanism

is long overdue in *LBP*, and we hope other level designers utilise this tool in some of their more punishing sections.

Rating: ★★★★★

CUSTOM SACK

Words: Adam Mathew

ATTACK



SPECIAL AGENT SACK BAUER

Who is he? Terrorists, your game is through, because now you have to answer to Special Agent Sack Bauer. Being a key member of CTU (Corduroy Terrorist Unit) only Bauer has the guts (or 'stuffing') to step up and stop major insurgent attacks on the United States, saving both civilians and governments in the process. On many occasions he does so at great personal expense, as those he thwarts subsequently target him and his loved ones. Despite that, when the chips are down and you need the world saved in 24 hours (plus commercials), only Bauer has the sack to follow through.

Custom level ideas: The level would run on a 24-minute time limit and it MUST have terrorists and a nuclear device of some description.

Extra props ideas: Pickups would include batteries for Sack Bauer's cellphone, and rescuing members of his Sack family. One of your CTU comrades needs to turn against you.

YARR!
DO YE
HAVE ANY
SPARE
CHANGE?
YARR...



CAPT'N SACK SPARROW

Who is he? Capt'n Sack Sparrow be the Pirate Lord of the Caribbean Sea and he be survivin' mostly by wits 'n navigation rather than by weapons and sensible mannerisms. Capt'n Sack's sole purpose for jumping from platform to platform is to scour for treasure, and to collect scurvy preventin' yellow fruit. Aye, that be true, when it comes to securin' booty he puts Hugh Hefner to shame, and if you get between him and his goal ye can expect to be slapped down to the poop deck - which is accurately named Ya-har!

Custom level ideas: A plank to walk, sail rigging to swing around on like Errol Flynn, and plenty of cannons shootin' crap at you. Oh, and barrels. Lots and lots of barrels.

Extra props ideas: Take the tip from ye olde cartoon Captain Pugwash by including a cabin boy named Master Bates.

AMY WINESACK

Who is she? They tried to make this sack go to rehab, but she said "no, no, no". Actually, she was too comatose to object to rehab, and they dragged her off anyway – but it's a much better story if we improvise some dialogue for her. If you want to have a truly addictive *LBP* experience, then look no further, because the Winesack is all about frantic, frenetic action. A final word of warning action junkies, don't be alarmed if your controls reverse themselves occasionally or if the level starts to spin.

Custom level ideas: A daring, psychedelic escape from rehab, of course! Sidestep the guards, raid the store-rooms for power-up pills, and remember to watch out for Sgt Pepper and his army of imaginary spiders.

Extra props ideas: Like *Super Mario Bros*, you'll collect magic mushrooms... tonnes of them in fact.

THEY TRIED TO GIVE ME BOOZE. I SAID YES, YES, YES!



JOKER! THTOP TAKING THE PITH OUT OF MY LITHP!

BATSACK AND THE SACKER

Who are they? The Batsack and The Sacker. This is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. One is a vigilante who takes pride in slapping the stuffing out of evil doers, while the other is a sadistic sack who is a few stitches short of a tea cosy, and he just wants to see the world burn. We want somebody to create these guys so that we can have the ultimate Gotham showdown...

Custom level ideas: The level would have to be equal measure 'dark' and 'brooding', with plenty of fire and explosions to keep The Sacker happy.

Extra props ideas: Other Dark Knight characters like Two Face (or 'Sack Face'), a Batsackmobile, and how about a nurse's uniform power-up for The Sacker (just to be extra, *extra* creepy)?

JEEZ BATMAN, I WANT THE NEWS, NOT THE WEATHER!



THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN AS *Prince*

We talk to the producer of the all-new *Prince of Persia* about the game's startling new direction.

TO SAY THAT Ubisoft has taken a risk with their landmark *Prince of Persia* franchise would be an understatement of massive proportions. A new look, a new story, a *myriad* of new game mechanics, and a whole new approach to an established franchise that many adore. But Ben Mattes, producer of the all-new *PoP*, is confident. During an epic 70 minute interview, we grilled Mr Mattes on subjects as broad as the state of gaming, his broadly Japanese influences, *Uncharted*, *Assassin's Creed* and of course... *Prince of Persia* itself. Enjoy.

OPS: *Prince of Persia* almost looks as if it was created by a Japanese developer, as opposed to a western one – was there a deliberate attempt to try to appeal to a Japanese audience with *Prince of Persia*?

Ben Mattes: I wouldn't say that it was our primary objective, our main focus was on the western market, but it was certainly a *tertiary* objective. We thought it would be cool to create something that would sort of bridge the gap between both audiences; it was always in the back of our minds that some of the mechanics and the visual style would be appealing to a Japanese market.

OPS: Was the art direction of *Prince of Persia* an attempt to broaden the appeal of the game?

Mattes: Well, it's hard to say... it was more a case of let's be awesome, you know? (Laughs) We saw *Assassin's Creed* going in a more hyper realistic direction, and we didn't want to go hyper as well, cause we'd kinda leech off each other's market. There was a desire to create an artistic direction that was very unique – we wanted to do something no-one had seen before, just so it was fun to develop, more than anything.

Basically the *Prince of Persia* games have always attracted the best illustrators, so our initial art has always been some of the best in the industry. When we released those illustrations to our fans, they would always love it, so it seemed fitting that we create a style that paid homage to that – to create a world that mimicked that original vision more accurately.

OPS: Going back to the Japanese thing, and this a broader question, what do you think about the state of the Japanese industry at the moment, a lot of people feel that they're falling behind western developers in many ways...

Mattes: It's hard for me to comment, because so many of the games that come out of Japan are outside our demographic, and have certain character designs, etc that don't really appeal; but every now and then Capcom, or Square, release an absolute monster of a game that just breaks down all those barriers.

A lot of those titles rank amongst my favourite ever – *Resident Evil 4* is probably in my top 5. *Okami*, *Ico*, *Shadow of the Colossus*, you know anything Team ICO has ever done – they're probably my most respected developer – and it looks like Platinum Games [*Bayonetta*, *Mad World*] is doing some cool stuff. A lot of these games share traits – they're cutscene heavy, they have collection mechanics, they have a lot of aspects that are specific to Japanese audiences, but there doesn't seem to be any downturn in the creativity of the Japanese developers at all. I mean *Resident Evil 5*, to me, is one of the most beautiful games I've

ever seen; in terms of a realistic aesthetic it's probably *the* best. So from that perspective it's hard to see why people think there's a problem.

OPS: You mentioned the Clover guys and Team ICO, and you've probably heard this over and over again

– *Prince of Persia* looks like *Ico*, it looks like *Okami*. These games seem to have a lot of similarities to *PoP*, and you've mentioned these developers are a huge inspiration – how do you respond to those comparisons?

Mattes: You know what? I'll happily accept those comparisons, we're not trying to hide that at all. You know, in *Okami* you had to heal the world, and in *PoP* you have to drive the corruption out; in *Ico* you partner with a girl, you have to hold hands, etc. What we tried to do is take some of these mechanics from titles that, you know, really didn't do that well in the west – both *Shadow of the Colossus* and *Okami* really didn't sell that many copies – and combine these mechanics with our brand, our world structure, and our innovative artistic direction, our innovative combat system, etc, etc, etc. We really wanted to create an art game that sells, you know what I mean? You look at Team ICO games they appeal to a real core set of players, real connoisseurs of videogames, but you know my mom is gonna pick it up and say – "oh it looks pretty, but I have no idea what to do". There's not enough hand holding, it's too subtle. We're hoping to take some of those great ideas, combine them with our own and hopefully create a game that appeals to a broader audience. That's what we're shooting for with *PoP*, that instantly accessible gameplay, it's important for us that *PoP* isn't just a high brow game.

OPS: It's interesting you mention 'high brow', because looking at the trailers, with the soundtrack – it's all slow motion, with Sigur Ros (a pretty 'high brow' rock band) playing. You mentioned that you want *PoP* to appeal to a broader market, but these trailers position

“ We saw *Assassin's Creed* go in a more hyper realistic direction, and we didn't want to go hyper as well, cause we'd kinda leech off each other's market... ”

the game as high brow – was that deliberate?

Mattes: Honestly, our marketing strategy never lined around the idea of creating a high brow artistic game – because these games can be poison to the American market. I mean, we need to move one million copies of

this game to satisfy our targets, for this game to be a success. So if we thought we were positioning the game as too 'high brow', we would have pulled back. To be honest we wanted to do something like the 'Mad World' trailer for *Gears of War* two years ago, or *Assassin's* last year, which was to do your artistic trailer to get people interested and then show some actual gameplay mechanics later. But the reaction from the first *PoP* trailer was so incredibly strong worldwide across every demographic, that the feeling internally was that we should do it again. In fact we ended the trailer with the battle scene at the very last minute, because we were worried that the trailer might be a little too snooty.

OPS: On another track, we spoke to Hideo Kojima, and he told us that he wanted to make *Metal Gear Solid 4* a game that, in his words, was for the core gamer. He wanted to make something that could save gaming, in a sense, from the overflow of casual titles. Where do you see gaming from that perspective – do you think gaming needs to be saved?

Mattes: Well, I side much more with Peter Molyneux [*Fable II*]. He recently said something very similar, stating that this line in the sand between hardcore and casual gamers is dangerous, and I really tend to agree. As long as we reinforce that divide, we're limiting the growth potential of the industry, forcing people to take sides in terms of how they define themselves. The issue is that a huge and growing side of the market doesn't even define themselves as either, yet they enjoy games. So if we are too aggressive about this differentiation, we risk losing these in-between gamers – because what games are they going to play? They won't want to play the *PopCap*

games and a game like *MGS4* is too tough, so they won't have a home. That's why *Prince of Persia*, and I think *Mirror's Edge* is trying to do this as well, is trying to broaden the appeal, create an overall entertainment package.

OPS: It's funny you say that, because *Assassin's Creed* got a lot of criticism for having controls that were 'too casual', playing *Prince of Persia* we noticed that the controls are actually quite traditional – and we don't mean that in a bad way. Do you think we're at the limit of what we can do with the traditional controller – do we need something new?

Mattes: Rhythm games. That was the eureka moment we had with *Prince of Persia* when we decided that we wanted to keep a more traditional control system. Rhythm games are probably the best at unifying the hardcore and casual gamers. If you look at a *Guitar Hero* controller – it has a lot of buttons! You have to manage multiple button-presses.

Their secret is that you have to quickly fall into the zen flow, the kind of gaming where you're looking through the TV screen, everything is washing over you and you're barely even thinking about it. We realised we had the potential to create something like that with *PoP*. We really do have that rhythmic gaming flow with the acrobatics. You press **X** to jump, you press **A** to use Elika, you use **○** to grab.

So you have these repetitive rhythmic button presses, and now when I play *PoP*, I just see patterns, and that's the kind of mechanic that makes rhythm games so addictive, and I think that will reflect in the reviews and reception of *Prince of Persia*.

OPS: We agree with you, but think it's a tough sell. Because when we show this to someone who doesn't play games, they're going to see all these acrobatics and complicated movement, and they'll say: "I can't do that!"

Mattes: That's a good point! I'm not saying that if you like *Guitar Hero*, you'll like our game; I'm saying that this could be a gateway game into the action genre. If you've ever had the longing to play those kind of action game's that let you pull off these acrobatics, then I think *Prince of Persia* could be the game that allows you to do that.

Look at Elika, the role of Elika, the strength of Elika,



The intent was for *Prince of Persia* to accurately mimic the games' illustrative art...

the fact that she's not just a sex object, I really believe that this will make her appealing to women – not just girl gamers – but women. I hope she'll be the kind of character that attracts women to play *PoP*.

OPS: Talking about Elika, we've played a fair bit of the game now, and it seems to me that she is more like a game mechanic than anything...

Mattes: Well, you're right. First and foremost

she's a weapon with a face. You could remove her personality, her character, and she could be a cool multi-functional gun! People rarely talk about avatars/characters in games and use the word 'love'. They don't say, for example, oh I loved Ashley in *Resident Evil 4*. What do they use that word for? They use that word for guns. They say I loved the BFG in *Doom*, that's an awesome weapon. Because what people love about games is the



PRINCE OF PERSIA IS... OKAMI!

Okami featured a wolf/god charging around a corrupted world attempting to drive the evil from the land. *Prince of Persia* forces you to drive the darkness from the world. *Okami* featured a startlingly artistic cel-shaded art style. *Prince of Persia* features a unique cel-shaded art style...



PRINCE OF PERSIA IS... ICO!

Ico featured a female character that stayed with you throughout the entire game. *PoP* features a girl that follows you around. *Ico* featured a black, shadowy goo that dragged you to your death... *PoP* features a black gooey evil that drags you to your death. That being said – in *PoP* it'll be Elika that saves your sorry arse.



PRINCE OF PERSIA IS... SOULCALIBUR!

This one's a bit more abstract, but Ben Mattes, and everyone else we've spoken to regarding *Prince of Persia*, hasn't been shy about acknowledging the debt the new *Prince of Persia* combat system owes to the *Soulcalibur* series. Apparently the team wanted to create similarly intimate, duel style battles.



PRINCE OF PERSIA IS... PRINCE OF PERSIA!

The game does have some awesome ideas of its own, though! And, like *Uncharted* before it, *Prince of Persia* is far more than the sum of its parts. In addition, Ubisoft have made it clear they want to stay true to the *PoP* franchise – both the originals, and the adventures from last gen.



■ Erika really allows us to give the Prince new powers, while still grounding him in reality – still making him a relatable character. ■

power, the sense of accomplishment.

We were like, let's make that weapon a human – but that brought a lot of problems, because the team were like, what if she dies, or what if she gets left behind? So not only does she have to be powerful, but she has to not get in the way. Our gamble is that if players love the function of Erika they'll be more susceptible to the character, to her back story. If we make her a bitch, gamers will be more willing to accept it, if we make her super nice, super sexy, they'll be more likely to embrace it.

She's a game mechanic first, and a storytelling mechanic second. After the mechanics everything else is a coat of paint.

OPS: So how do you intend to make players care about Erika if she's a gameplay mechanic first? Taking *ICO* as an example, when you're dragging Yorda everywhere, you're taking care of her, that's your motivation for caring. Was it difficult to make gamers care about Erika?

Mattes: Well, basically, when you no longer have her around things will get tough. This is the mechanic we play around with at different points in the game, you come across a level, and we find a way to remove Erika. Things get really difficult – you don't have Erika to help you with combos and everything sucks.

Another way we mess around with it is sometimes when you're in the middle of a fight, you throw Erika at the enemy, she gets swatted away, and now you don't have her for the fight anymore. It's like you've run out of ammo!

Then of course there's the story stuff, all the narrative elements that we use to try and make you care about Erika. We ultimately don't know if gamers are going to like Erika, but even if they don't, it's not the end of the world – it's just important that they don't *hate* her.

At the very least gamers have to be neutral about her, because Erika really allows us to give the Prince new powers, while still grounding him in reality – still making him a relatable character.

OPS: It's funny you mention keeping characters grounded in reality, because with *Uncharted* one of our major problems with the game was that Nathan Drake was being painted as this relatable everyman, yet he was scaling up rock surfaces like a gymnast and shooting people like Jason Bourne – it kinda didn't fit...

Mattes: *Uncharted* is a game I liked to talk about, cause I loved it as a sum of its parts, but I was constantly bitching at it: the cover system isn't as good as *Gears*, the platforming isn't as good as ours... but when I was done, I wanted to play it

again, because it was a great overall experience

That's what we want to do with *PoP* – we don't want to sell the game as a tech demo, but as a sophisticated entertainment experience, something that's just a great package.

The thing I found inconsistent with *Uncharted* wasn't the acrobatics, it was the fact that this fallible, wise-cracking character was slaughtering hundreds of people over the course of a day! That was one of the many reasons we went for one-on-one combat with *PoP*. When you have a hero slaughtering hordes of whatever, it's hard to make him feel fallible, because he's effectively Cortana! He's another shade of Kratos.

By the end of *Prince of Persia* we want you to feel like you've just spent 15 hours in this guy's life. We want there to be a sense of progression – at the start you've agreed to try to save the world to get into this girl's pants, but by the end you've really matured, you've become a noble hero.

OPS: You mentioned that you didn't want *PoP* to be a tech demo, but a lot of people were critical of *Assassin's Creed* for that reason, do you think that was an issue with that game?

Mattes: My personal thing with *Assassin's Creed* was that the game was a victim of its own success. It had almost three years



of buzz, started in 2005, coverage up the ying yang – and for good reason, it was a spectacular achievement.

But with that level of hype people are always going to find something wrong with the game after all this expectation. I mean, some people were disappointed with the *Lord of the Rings* movie for that reason.

The new *Star Wars* movies are the perfect example. For me *Assassin's Creed's* failure wasn't repetition, it wasn't a lack of this, or a lack of that, it was just that after three years of buzz and hype it was impossible to live up to the gamers and journalists expectations.

OPS: Ubisoft don't have to learn anything from how it promoted *Assassin's* since it sold so well, but have they learned anything from the experience? Has it affected how you guys have gone about promoting *Prince of Persia*?

Mattes: Yes, certainly. It had a big impact on *when* we started talking about the game. We wanted to make sure we only started to talk about it when we had something to show.

One of the reasons we decided to wait was when we started showing stuff we wanted it to be real, you know? It had to be in-game. We didn't want to start the buzz too early and risk having that backlash. That was the biggest lesson we learned. Another lesson is that *Assassin's* learned, and we learned, not to underestimate the player's need for diversity.

I think if Jade [Raymond] were here, or Patrice

[Desilets] were here, they would say that the biggest weakness of *Assassin's* was that it got a little repetitive. That's one of the things that will change when the next *Assassin's* comes out, and that's one of the things we focused on with *Prince of Persia*.

OPS: Going back to the art direction, and the choices you've made to try to make an art game that sells. It seems like you've taken a lot of risks with *Prince of Persia* – are your nuts on the chopping block with this one? What happens if it doesn't sell, are you worried about the consequences?

Mattes: (Groans in pain) Well... because it's *PoP*, and because there's buzz, there's sales expectations and if we meet those sales expectations then the business guys will say, "okay those risks paid off" – so Ubisoft will continue to take risks with other games in the future. If we don't meet sales expectations by a long shot, it'll be... "you guys took too many risks", so yeah it will be a case of nuts on the chopping block.

Am I worried? Well, I *would* be afraid if we hadn't achieved what we said we would at the beginning of development. We wanted you not to hate Elika, we wanted to be innovative, we wanted a cool combat system, we wanted to stay true to the *Prince of Persia* feel, and I think we've achieved all those things.

So because of that I think we can totally hold our heads high regardless of the outcome. There are those butterflies in the stomach though – is

it just going to review well, or is it going to review *really* well? Is it going to sell, or is it going to sell *really* well?

OPS: You mentioned review scores and sales. If you had to choose one or the other – if you had to choose between 10 million worldwide sales, or the exceptional scores – which one would you choose?

Mattes: (Pause and smiles) Well I could argue for either. If I had the incredible sales, that would give me the power to fix what was wrong with the original game, and the bosses would say – "give us a sequel".

OPS: Is that the position that Jade and Patrice are in at the moment? The sales were there, so now let's make the sequel and show them all?

Mattes: You know, I don't wanna put words in their mouth, but I wouldn't be surprised!

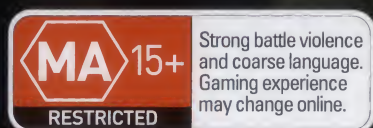
Now on the flipside, if you had incredible reviews but no sales, well it's *Beyond Good and Evil* syndrome. It took over five years for a sequel to be announced, and, you know, probably over four years to get the game made.

The short term reward from the reviews would be great, but strategically speaking in terms of the strength of the brand, and longevity of it... you know the producer in me is leaning towards the sales, because you have the chance to right your wrongs. If you just have the reviews, you might not get that chance. ▀

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PLAYSTATION 3

WORDS: JAMES COTTEE

MUTANT

Rip and tear! Logan's getting brutal on the PS3

Wolverine promises violence. Spectacular, gory violence, repeated in imaginatively gruesome ways.

This alone is a breath of fresh mountain air. Too often we are doled out watered-down slop in our adaptations. Like fairy tales that become less gruesome with every telling, out of some paternalistic delusion that shielding children from death and dismemberment somehow does them a service.

Utter nonsense. We all crave violence in our entertainment. Those who claim they do not are limp-wristed toffs or liars. In the original version, Red Riding Hood gets eaten. The End. Whoever came up with the version where a woodsman cuts the wolf open to rescue her deserves to have his Ventolin inhaler thrown on the roof of a passing bus.

Hollywood is no better. Hard-edged entertainment is blunted time and again by the one-size-fits-all PG-13 rating. Certainly, a Wolverine of sorts was in the *X-Men* movies. He had claws, and he killed. But we saw no blood and guts.

Hardcore fans are never happy with the movie version, but in this case they were rightfully aggrieved. The offal stayed in its sacs. The rivers of blood were dammed. The ADD of hope dulled by the Ritalin of pre-emptive censorship.

The videogames were no better – that *X-Men 3* game was a mangy, feral dog. Activision senior producer Brian Pass admits as much: “It’s no secret that Wolverine in the past has not been as successful a franchise for Activision as it could’ve been.”

So, what of this

new cinematic prequel? This origin story, presumptive enough to announce a budding franchise in its title: *X-Men Origins*. Comic fans with long memories will have plenty of reasons to be skeptical of a superhero spinoff. Think of *Elektra*. Think of *Supergirl*. Think of... think of



Catwoman. A movie so dire that Halle Berry felt compelled to accept her Razzie in person.

The odds are against this flick. Hey, we don't have a horse in this race – we're just saying. The game, on the other hand, is a very different story. No soulless, gold-grubbing studio golems, the chaps at Raven have proven themselves time and again capable of producing perfectly acceptable brawlers.

X-Men Legends 1 & 2 and *Marvel Ultimate Alliance* all scored over 80 on Metacritic. This is telling. There are a lot of gutless hacks out there who'll give a seven out of 10 to just about anything. 'Three and a half stars? Wow! What a freaking incisive review! Thanks for stealing three minutes of my life I'll NEVER GET BACK.' A seven tells you nothing. Maybe you'd piss on it if it was on fire.

Maybe you wouldn't.

But games that score eight or higher are in a class of their own. These games may not be *GTA IV*, but they get the job done. Add a few mates and a few beers, and you've got a Friday night to

remember. Once rented, the weekend takes care of itself.

We don't want to tempt fate, but from what we've seen this game is a solid brawler – not so much a beat-em-up as a slash-em-up. Slice and dice. Puree. A Bamix to the eye socket. We do not shudder to think what kind of trophies will be awarded in this procedural bloodbath. Rather we tingle with anticipation.

As Mr Pass explains, it's all about bringing out the core of Wolverine's appeal. "We wanted to go back to the drawing board and figure out exactly what we needed to do to make this a successful franchise."

The opening movie depicts our hairy hero dispatching some generic black-ops special forces dudes, and defying the expectations of everyone involved. A soldiering scoundrel, assault rifle at the ready, creeps towards the edge of a concrete wall, expecting to surprise whoever is on the other side.

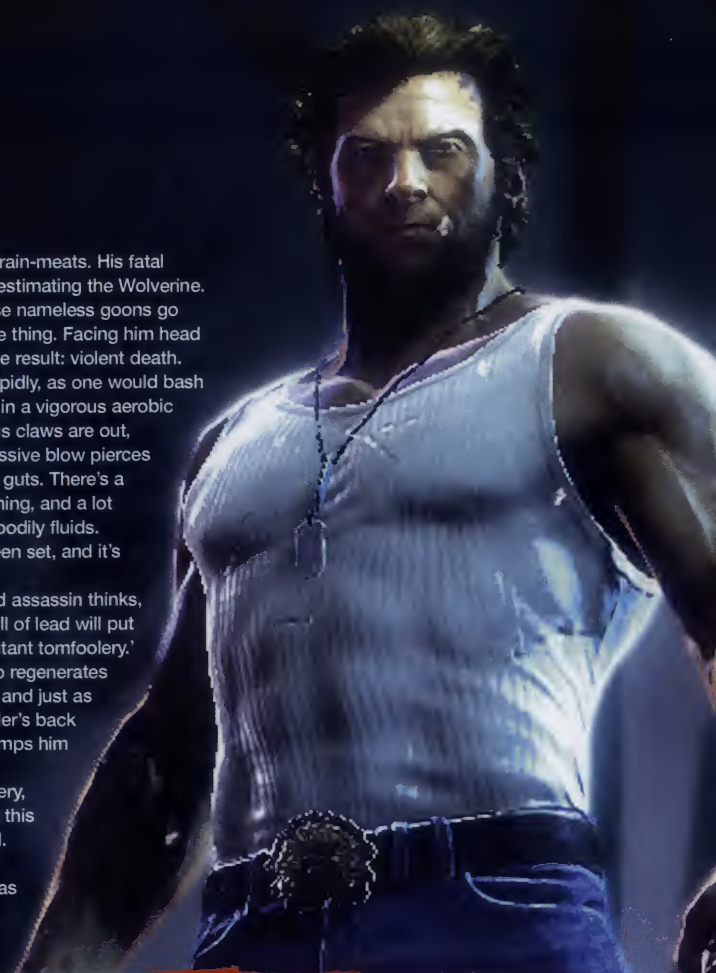
He does not get the chance. A trident of death slices clean through the masonry, and straight through his head. Glorious squelching accompanies the

piercing of his brain-meats. His fatal mistake? Underestimating the Wolverine.

More of these nameless goons go and do the same thing. Facing him head on nets the same result: violent death. Logan strikes rapidly, as one would bash a punching bag in a vigorous aerobic workout. Only his claws are out, and each successive blow pierces the mercenary's guts. There's a lot more squelching, and a lot more escaping bodily fluids. The tone has been set, and it's blood red.

'Aha!', a third assassin thinks, 'shooting him full of lead will put a stop to his mutant tomfoolery.' But no. Our hero regenerates within seconds, and just as his would-be killer's back is turned, he bumps him off, too.

We will be very, very surprised if this game gets an M. This interactive slasher movie has MA15+ written



▶ Haha! He kicked a midget – hilarious



FAVOURITE SON

He might lack the universal recognition of Spider-Man, but few comic book characters can match the fan-appeal of Wolverine (Logan to his friends, Weapon X to his shady former govt. employers). So great is his selling power, he's been overexposed of late. Not only does he have his own ongoing series, plus numerous amounts of spinoffs (*Origins*, *Manifest Destiny*, *First Class*, *Killing Made Simple*, *Chop Shop*...) he's also appearing in comics as diverse as *Uncanny X-Men*, *Astonishing X-Men*, *New Avengers*, *X-Force* and, er, *Power Pack*.



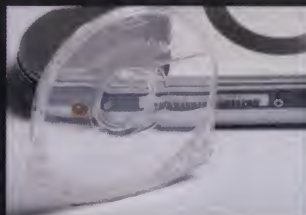
▶ You might say that it's a 'ripping' adventure (guffaw!)



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COMPETITION CLOSES 18.2.09





all over it. Assuming the Classification Board passes it at all – it wasn't that long ago that Activision hit a brick wall with *Soldier of Fortune: Payback*. As one local Activision rep put it, "it's pretty graphic."

Yet as Mr Pass repeatedly stresses, the game has been designed to be as accessible as possible. "The fighting system is designed to be very fast-paced and frenetic. It's very easy to pick up the fighting system. But there's a lot of depth."

A leveling system introduces new combos and abilities as you go, serving both to reward your progress and ease you into the play mechanics. There's a lot to take in: blocking, dodging, and let's not forget lunging. Once unlocked, this gives Logan the ability to leap huge distances through the air. Lunges can be used to reach previously inaccessible areas, or to simply close in on distant enemies without having to wait the agonising seconds it would take to run over to them.

Basically, *Wolverine* is never going to put you in a position where you're thinking 'oh great, now I've got to run aaaaall the way over there.' The platforming segments won't break your brain either, thanks to Logan's new Feral Sense.

When activated, this *Predator*-style vision highlights which particular ledges you're expected to clamber over to advance. No more furtive visits to bloody GameFaqs every time you fail to read the level designer's mind.

Logan's also got feral abilities, fueled by an orange feral power bar just below his life bar. This ties in neatly with one of the key facets of his character: rage. Unlike a certain dopey green Marvel hero, Logan can actually channel his anger, usually into flurries of unspeakable deeds.

"In addition to being able to fight enemies on the ground, you can also grab enemies and do various things with them." For elaboration on 'various things,' think back to that gory Punisher game that Volition brought out a few years ago. "You can actually pick enemies up, and you can throw them. You can see a guy there that's impaled on a spike... there's a lot of environmental interaction in this game." There's juggling too, with rapid-fire upwards stabbing keeping baddies aloft.

Raven have paid a lot of attention to the little things – the way that Wolverine heals, for instance. No need to divert your eyes to a health bar when the damage on his body is plain to see. Through his dynamically ripped shirt you'll see all his wounds marked in horrid red, rapidly contracting as his mutant healing ability does its work.

The story will not only emulate the events of the film, it will build on them.

One core strength of spinoffs like this one is the opportunity to let comic book excess come alive – events that would be too overblown even for a mainstream Hollywood movie.

To that end, *Wolverine* will be fighting the Sentinels. We only saw one briefly in the 'Danger Room' training sequence in *X-Men 3*, and only its head at that. But these 200-foot-tall robots (designed as a means of controlling mutants by the US government) will be living large in *Wolverine* – Logan's battles with these gargantuan killing machines will make *Shadow of the Colossus* look like a midget rodeo.

Hopefully, *Wolverine* will also beef up the character roster, and let the grizzled Canadian hero hang out with Gambit, Deadpool and other iconic Marvel characters who apparently only get minor parts in the film. Activision wasn't willing to expand on this point, and at this stage can only confirm three characters for the game: *Wolverine*, Sabretooth and Kestrel – a mutant who, like Nightcrawler, has the power to teleport. Unlike Nightcrawler, he's played by popular rap artist Will.i.am.

We've yet to get hands-on time with *Wolverine*, let alone play it at length. The biggest question mark hovering over this game is how Raven will transition from making primarily co-op brawlers to a more *God of War*-esque single-player experience. Though judging from the gory details we've seen so far, they're definitely on the right track. **B**

▶ "Hey boy. You look mighty cute in them jeans"



DEADPOOL

Confirmed for the movie, but not for the game (not yet...) is Deadpool – the wisecracking, mass-murdering mercenary with the same power of regeneration as Wolverine. Wade Wilson's self-referential satire makes him a cult favourite amongst comic geeks, but his flippant sense of humour may not sit well in a game that takes itself as seriously as *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.



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ENTER SANDMEN

WORDS: JAMES ELLIS

Metallica, metal's mainstream tear-down boys, are thundering their way onto the PlayStation 3 with a new *Guitar Hero* game dedicated to their whiskey-throat growling and elemental sound. Along with lead designer Alan Flores from Neversoft, we take a first look at what metal heads will be in for with *Guitar Hero: Metallica*...

"Once Metallica saw *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith* and saw what we could do if we focused on a band, they were really into the idea of doing a game," says *Guitar Hero: Metallica* designer, Alan Flores.

That's all it took. With both *Guitar Hero World Tour* and *Rock Band* proving more popular than a *Brokeback Mountain* sequel starring Jessica Alba and Angelina Jolie, it was only a matter of time before musical bigwigs shifted their weight and followed *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith* with an edgier, bigger band cum franchise that

utilised the entire guitar-drums-mic combination. In this case, that band is Metallica, and even if you prefer yodelling to metal, after over 15 years in the limelight and nine studio records, it's hard to dispute their selection.

In addition to the band's scoreboard highlights, members Kirk Hammett, Lars Ulrich, James Hetfield and Robert Trujillo have been keener than a pisshead outside a kebab joint to contribute to the package, sitting down with Neversoft early on to scream ideas back and forth. Obviously a sizeable chunk of their input went into deciding which of Metallica's songs would make the final cut. Fortunately, between the band

and the developers, it turns out the songs to be included were almost a foregone conclusion.

"The guys here at Neversoft and Activision came up with a list of songs that we thought would make a great *Metallica* game – some of their biggest hits, more obscure fan favourites, and songs that really touched certain people," says Flores. "Once we had that, we compared it with Lars Ulrich's list and found they were almost identical."

After combining the two, developer Neversoft have been busy shaving the selection down. That's a work in progress,



but so far they've released the titles of 11 songs that will definitely be taking centre stage (see The Table of Metals). For hardcore fans that recently purchased *Death Magnetic*, don't fret; those tracks will be playable in the game too.

While we're yacking about songs, it turns out Metallica have invited friends and direct influences along for the ride. From Alice in Chains to Mastodon, each of the other bands who turn up with a cameo song all have some direct connection with the Metallica boys. Again, it's still a work in progress, but we can expect to see 45 songs in total from both Metallica and 20 other legendary rockers brought to life along with the game's new perks.

Speaking of which, just what are these perks and, more obviously, what's with releasing a full-blown game that's going to cost major clams as opposed to jumping aboard the DLC train and distributing the Metallica songs online? Is this some elaborate con by the band to even the scoreboard after the Napster debacle (see The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly)?

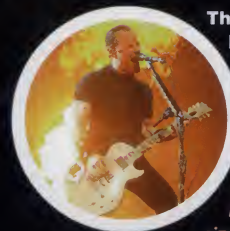
"If we were just offering songs, then that would be an obvious question," argues Flores. "However, we are offering so much more... with *Metallica* we've got a huge amount of extra content. We can barely fit it all on the disc."

It turns out Flores isn't spouting tripe. By far the biggest new addition to the game is – get this – compatibility with a second kick drum pedal. For those who've never been to a band

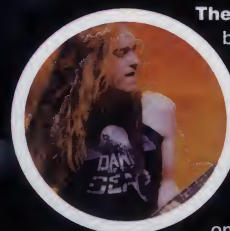
performance besides Human Nature, a butt-load of drummers worldwide use this second pedal to smack the kick drum like an angry Rocky Balboa pounding a dead ham. While all of Metallica's songs use this second pedal, up until now the *GH* developers have been forced to designate the rapid-fire kick drum notes as unplayable. However by selecting *Guitar Hero: Metallica*'s new drum difficulty called Expert+ with the second pedal plugged in, these double kicks will now become part of the challenge. Fortunately for gamers that don't know whether to scratch their watch of wind their balls when they get behind a kit, they can still use the double kick on the lower difficulty with the double kit notes omitted while they build up their co-ordination.

Another bonus for little drummer boys and girls is ►

METALLICA: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY



The Good – These lads have shifted records. As of September 2008, Metallica were rated fifth overall in terms of music sales after selling a total of 50,111,000 albums in the US alone. Their 1991 album *Metallica* accounts for a sizeable chunk of that, selling 37 million copies worldwide. Money, money, money, boys.



The Bad – Tragedy struck the band back in 1986 when then bassist Clifford Burton was killed when the band's tour bus lost control and flipped over several times. Ironically the band had drawn cards to decide who'd score the best bunk on the bus, and Clifford wound up pinching guitarist Hammett's original position. Neither Hammett, Hetfield nor Ulrich were seriously harmed in the accident.



The Ugly – Who could forget the huge Napster controversy that kicked off back in 2000? When Metallica found out their entire back catalogue was available for download for free from Napster, they farted out an anvil each and went into legal eagle mode. They dragged Napster to court, eventually teaming up with Dr Dre to ban the users downloading their songs, and caused enough damage that Napster were forced into liquidation by 2002.





THE TABLE OF METALS (SO FAR...)

METALLICA TRACKS

(songs in pink are played in-the-round)

- Enter Sandman
- **For Whom The Bell Tolls**
- Fuel
- Hit The Lights
- King Nothing
- **Master of Puppets**
- No Leaf Clover
- Nothing Else Matters
- Sad But True
- **The Unforgiven**
- Wherever I May Roam

NON-METALLICA TRACKS

- Alice In Chains - No Excuses
- Bob Seger - Turn The Page
- Judas Priest - Hell Bent For Leather
- Kyuss - Demon Cleaner
- Lynyrd Skynyrd - Tuesday's Gone
- Mastodon - Blood and Thunder
- Michael Schenker Group - Armed and Ready
- Samhain - Mother of Mercy
- The Sword - Black River

ARTIST ONLY

- Foo Fighters
- Queen



➤ Look at the length of that stride. Legendary

that there's a cheat promised that will turn off the drum tracks for each song and let canvas bashers go wild as they improvise their brand of smacky-smack over the top of songs. Imagine being able to pound the set madly like a cat lit up with kerosene to something like 'Fuel'. It's an awesome cheat, and one we hope will become standard for any and all future releases.

Just so you know – because we know you're all wondering – gamers won't have to buy an entire new set of instruments to partake of this frenzied metal fantasy. Activision are out to make it easy.

"We're still working out the logistics on this, but players will definitely be able to buy the pedal as a stand-alone," says Flores. "The game will also be available

as stand-alone software. So, if you've purchased any previous *Guitar Hero* games, your drums and guitars will totally work with *Guitar Hero: Metallica*."

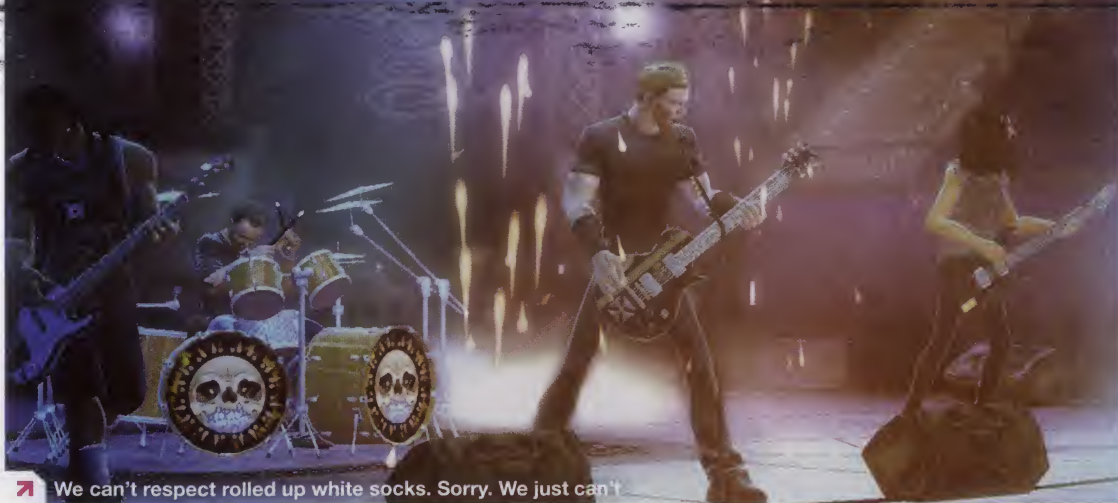
It goes without saying, of course, that *Rock Band* owners shouldn't hold their breath for cross-compatibility with the second kick drum. None of their songs have support for the pedal coded in.

Beyond the second kick drum there's also been a pack of work done to create an authentic Metallica 'experience', though this sort of stuff will probably be more of a boon to zealots than casual head bangers. Full-body scans and signature animations captured from the boys themselves will combine with real-world stage locales, art and pyrotechnics to sign, seal and deliver

this heaving package of sweat and manly manliness.

There'll also be some slick little bits and pieces that fans will be able to lap up. One such mode is called 'Metallifacts'. This involves bits of trivia popping on screen during song playback that discusses all sorts of insights into how each song was written and what they're about.

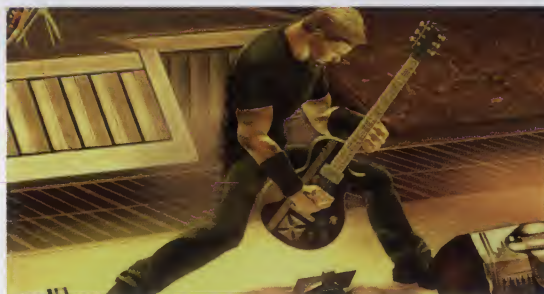
"The cool thing about this feature is that it gives you some special insight from James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich about how songs were written or what they're about," adds Flores. "And, it also gives some context for why certain guest artists are in the game. For instance, the first album that James Hetfield ever purchased (with his lawn mowing money) was from Lynyrd



➔ We can't respect rolled up white socks. Sorry. We just can't



➔ Maybe Guitar Hero: Metallica can make us not hate battle mode



Skynyrd which helps explain why one of their songs appears in the game."

Fortunately apart from all the gibbering and jabbering, there are also some cool new features that relate to *Guitar Hero: Metallica*'s 'Battle' mode. Again, it'll be both online and offline and will include a trunk of attacks that are "Metallica-based". 'Whammy Attack' and 'Amp Overload', generic as they are, have been given the Metallica blessing and mutated into stuff like 'Ride the Lightning', which charges your opponents highway with bolts of electricity, 'Fade to Black', which blacks out their screen, and 'Trapped Under Ice', which turns their whammy bar into an icy pole.

While the above litter of extras does merit applause, what we're most chuffed

about is how Activision were proactive enough to improve the Music Studio feature that copped a lot of stick due to the poor quality of its samples. The developers have now included samples from an ESP Truckster guitar that James Hetfield uses and grabbed some bass sounds from an ESP bass used by the likes of Tom Araya from Slayer.

Whether that'll be enough to turn the Music Studio into a hive of creativity for domestic muses is anyone's guess, but any improvement is definitely a step in the right direction.

Overall you don't need to have the musical entrepreneurship of Simon "you're all buggered," Cowell to see that bands and the music industry are looking mighty

bloody closely at this one. Forget albums, interactive music games might be the cash cow that allows them to continue pumping smack on their yachts for years. More seriously, imagine what future releases might happen. How about the pop kings The Beatles (okay, that might be a problem seeing as paperwork has blocked them appearing on iTunes), or Radiohead, U2 or the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

"I certainly hope we see more band games", says Flores. "It's fun to be able to dive a little deeper into a band's catalogue of songs, learn some of the band history and find out what bands are important to them to include in their game. And, there are a lot of bands out there overflowing with history to explore." 🐸

METALLICA VERSUS AEROSMITH

STYLE

AEROSMITH

While we can joke about how much it costs to look that cheap, Aerosmith can't help but look like a bunch of old codgers trapped in some teenage '80s time warp. Hell – these guys are '80s style. While that look came back briefly a couple of years ago, it has since vapourised.

METALLICA

These boys have gone through their own stylistic revolutions, too, ranging from long mullets in the '80s to the trucker beards they wear today. But they score major points with the zero fuss black getups they now usually sport.

WINNER: METALLICA

MUSIC

AEROSMITH

These blokes have tunes that roll about all over the place. From the comical 'Dude (Looks Like a Lady)', to their epic anthem 'Livin' On the Edge', to more recent trash like 'I Don't Want to Miss a Thing', they're awash with a variety of influences. Despite the mix of quality it's hard to diss the band that wrote 'Walk This Way'.

METALLICA

More focused, more powerful, Metallica may not have had as many pop friendly singles, but their standout songs, such as 'Enter Sandman' and 'Nothing Else Matters' are seminal pillars in their genre. While they haven't crafted anything quite as catchy in any of their last few albums, those monster songs can still be heard everywhere.

WINNER: METALLICA

PERSONALITY

AEROSMITH

Steven Tyler has a massive gob and takes to flopping about on stage. While he's not someone you'd want to flat with, there's no denying that he commands your gaze. The other members – well – they've been hiding under their lady locks.

METALLICA

Hetfield is more like a booming thunder totem than a singer on stage. Both he and Ulrich can carve up any performance with their snarling roars and kinetic movements. It's a pity they had to whinge about Napster while most bands were content to sit back and continue counting their mountainous sums of cash.

WINNER: AEROSMITH

OVERALL WINNER: METALLICA



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Four SingStar game boxes for PlayStation 3 are displayed in a row. From left to right, they feature Bruno Mars, Lady Gaga, The Black Eyed Peas, and a 'SingStar Vol. 3' compilation. Each box includes a 'PS3' logo at the top, a 'SingStar' title, and a PEGI rating (PG or 6). A black microphone is positioned in the foreground, angled towards the games.



IN REVIEW

REVIEW RATING

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible. While a 10 doesn't necessarily mean a game is perfect – it's as near as dammit, and is a shining example of all that is right with gaming. This is the kind of game we live for.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent. Outstanding in every way. Some negligible blemishes hold it back from being a 10, but is almost definitely the best in its genre, and well worth buying.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great. A game receiving this score comes highly recommended. Despite a few issues here and there, this title is ahead of the pack in most departments.

7 Good. A robust game where the noticeable issues can be overlooked in lieu of the overall experience provided. Still well worth a look at this stage.

6 Decent. This game will have some pretty glaring flaws, and possibly not be worth recommending. Will still have some redeeming features, however...

5 Mediocre. This game will be entertaining in parts without excelling anywhere, yet equally sub par in others without being outright awful.

4 Poor. Will be unrefined, undercooked and let down by shoddy execution and poor attention to detail. This game should be avoided at all costs.

3 Very disappointing. This game is fundamentally flawed in a number of ways – uninspired, boring and flawed in every way...

2 Terrible. Virtually everything about this game is guff beyond belief, and some parts will simply be broken. Not worth the effort.

1 The worst. This score is reserved for the very worst that gaming has to offer. This game will be an offensive, putrid, mess with zero redeeming qualities.

We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...



The beginning of any gaming year tends to be a time for quiet, for reflection and time spent catching up on the final flourish of awesome that tends to occur during each Christmas period. So imagine my child-like gaping amazement when two of my most anticipated games of 2009 dropped on my doorstep one fine morn, duking it out for my undivided attention, scuffling amongst themselves, a-pushing and a-shoving for some Markie love. Alas, I had time for only one – and after forcing both games into a bizarre dance-off to the beat of 'Jungle

Boogie' by Kool and the Gang, despite the fact that both of them are actually game discs and, hence, inanimate objects, I chose *SKATE 2*. Time, and the review pages that follow, shall tell if I made the correct decision, but I regret nothing. Now to rob Anthony's house via stealthy, cardboard box assisted assault to pick up/steal his copy of *Killzone 2*! Wish me luck everyone.

Mark Serrels

MARK SERRELS

WE CAN'T STOP PLAYING...



PRINCE OF PERSIA

It's too easy, and it's actually impossible to die in any conventional manner, but we still love the new direction Ubisoft have bravely ventured towards.



SKATE 2

This is what gaming's all about. *SKATE 2* is without peer in the world of extreme sport, or sports gaming for that matter. In short – it's delicious.



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

Expectations were low for Treyarch's return to *COD*, but we were as blown away as we were with *Modern Warfare*.



INFO

GENRE: SHOOTER
 RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2008
 DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
 DEVELOPER: GUERRILLA GAMES
 PLAYERS: 1-32
 PRICE: \$109.95

KILLZONE

War is hell. Nah, just kidding – it's awesome!

It was Nietzsche – that jolly German philosopher responsible who was responsible for such heart-warming gems as, “God is dead” and “if you stare in the abyss too long it stares back” and the oft quoted, “that which does not kill me makes me stronger.”

Why someone didn't just throw a toaster at the miserable bastard's head and yell: “Oi, Fred! Did THAT make you stronger, mate?!” no-one knows – but the quote we're interested here is: “Fear is the mind killer.”

Actually Fear Factory used that quote as a title for a remix album, so maybe Nietzsche popped forward in time, heard Fear Factory say it, and copied it in, um... the past.

Unlikely, granted, but it's good to keep an open mind about these things.

Anyway, point is, we have to respectfully disagree with old Frederick here (what's he going to do, decompose on us?) and say “expectation is the mind killer.”

Example: *Lair*. Expectations were high, and the game broke a lot of hearts. Let's go even further back – the

original *Killzone*. The stills looked so good you wanted to lick them, the design was slick and the game... was slow, repetitive and ultimately drab.

The PSP fared a little better with the third person shooter *Killzone: Liberation*, but really it was a sensual massage without a happy ending.

And that's just wrong, readers, dirty dog wrong.

DUDE, IF YOU DON'T START TALKING ABOUT THE GAME WE WILL BEAT YOU WITH STICKS!

Alright. Just setting the mood. That used to matter, you know. Bloody kids. Anyway, *Killzone 2* – with the fake “in game” footage scandal, the endless delays and rumoured tryst with Lindsay Lohan (possibly) has made many a gamer and game journo bite their collective fingernails.

Stop biting.

PlayStation
 Official Magazine - Australia

**GOLD
 AWARD**



2

IN REVIEW

Killzone 2

ARE YOU HARD ENOUGH?

We reviewers, we happy few, play a lot of games – both for money and fun. Point is we get pretty damn good at games. So when yours truly got this review it got cranked up to the hardest difficulty level available (you unlock an even harder one after you finish the game). This proved to be quite a challenge. Especially the last level where this ‘elite gamer’ died 269 times before beating it. No joke. Conclusion: maybe play it on normal for a while.



PRECISE

Sniper rifles are great, but on consoles they can lack precision. You’ve probably heard PC gamers slag off console FPS’. Well now you can use SIXAXIS to move the aiming reticle just that little bit you need. Giving you as good, if not better, precision than mouse and keyboard.

WORSE THAN ABILITY TO FLY
BETTER THAN RESISTANCE 2



➤ Hey guys, let's run away from George – he stinks



➤ "He has red eyes SHOOT!" "No wait I just have a hangover!"

Cease your muttering and pacing, brothers and sisters, because yours truly can say this with no hesitation: *Killzone 2* is the best console first person shooter ever.

Better than *Call of Duty: World at War* and *Resistance 2*? Yes and yes. Although *COD* is a close second best and *Resistance 2* is still a great game – but *Killzone 2* is going to blow you away.

Now before we go any further, we should tell you that, like *Resistance 2*, we’ll be reviewing the single player campaign this issue, multiplayer in the next one. But that’s cool – *KZ2* has one of the most satisfying campaigns you’ll ever encounter.

BREAK IT DOWN FOR US, BIG DOG

Killzone 2 is the third game set in the *KZ* universe. And this time it’s your turn to take

the fight to those glowing-eyed Helghast mongrels! You play Sev, part of an elite team that wants to attain the lofty goal of capturing Helghast leader Emperor Visari (voiced by Brian Cox).

The opening cutscene where your dropship tears arse down to the planet is so gobsmackingly beautiful we stood like damned fools, getting shot to pieces. The graphics are so good – we thought we were still in the cutscene!

That sort of set the tone for the rest of the game. It’s so, so beautiful to behold. Yes, perhaps the brown, blue and grey palette is a tad overused, but it’s not all set in Helghan cities – and the level design is truly excellent. But more on that later.

First off, let’s talk about *Killzone 2*’s controls. At OPS we have a checklist of FPS must-haves. You should be able to

take cover – check. You should be able to zoom and look down your gun’s iron sights/aiming reticle – check. You should be able to go prone – nope. But when you take cover you tend to go low anyway – but still, developers: prone position is important, okay?

You should have a huge number of weapons to choose from – check. In a big way.

But this is kind of a good news/bad news situation we’ve got going here. You can carry one of the game’s numerous weapons – and some of them are just amazing – but you can only carry one.

You have a backup, Magnum-style, handgun you can pull out, and if you pick up other handguns it will change your sidearm, but you’ll have one main weapon to blitz the Helghast with.

BUT SURELY THAT’S A BAD THING, RIGHT?

Nope, in fact it makes the game all the more exciting. You have to work out your battle plan. Will you try to snipe the Hellies, or use one of the machine guns or assault rifles? In one particularly memorable battle near the start of the game, you occupy a building facing *another* building just across the street. Said other building has Helghast everywhere. You can take them down tactically, but it’s hard. Damn hard. Then, out of sheer frustration, we got a big gun and just started blasting. When our shots started shooting pillars a strange thing happened: they broke! We kept the fire on the building and it collapsed! Crushing most of the Helghast, leaving us to mop up the stragglers.

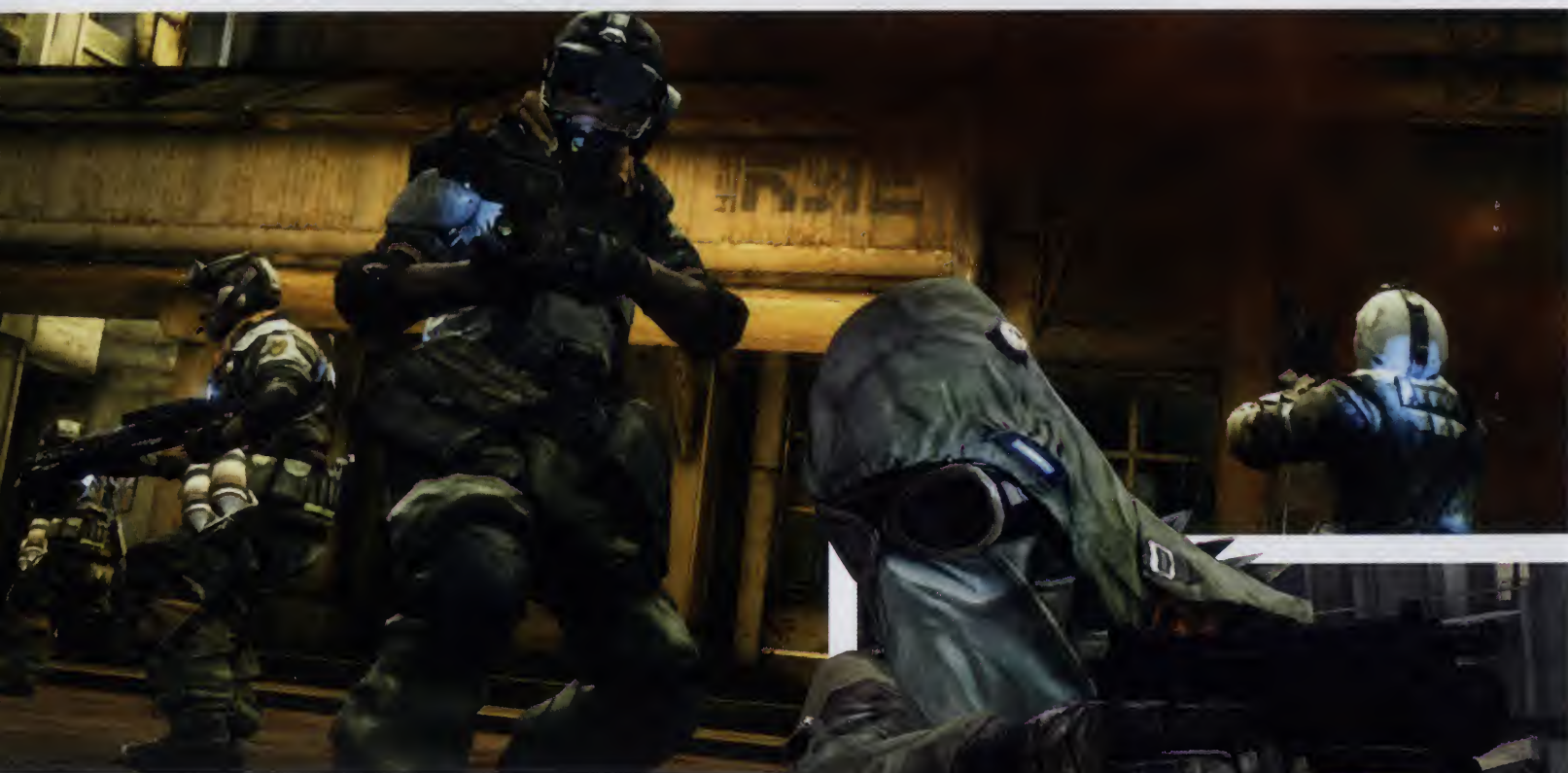
That’s another brilliant thing: the



Even badass space soldiers wear knee pads – safety first

INVASION OF THE SPACE NAZIS

Look, it's pretty obvious the Helghast were, visually at least, based on the Nazis, the SS in particular. Also Emperor Visari has some similarities with Hitler. They both command unthinking obedience, they both bang on in endless speeches and they're both total douche bags. Coincidence? We think not!



Helghast death animations. Hit them in the leg and they'll clutch their wound. Lob a grenade near them, but not close enough to kill them, and they'll stagger about, confused and in shock. Blast one of the more armoured enemies with an entire clip and as they shamle around, getting ready to zap, you can simply whip out your trusty sidearm and finish them off. It's an awesome move and the reactions of the enemy, both visually and aurally, are so spot on you almost feel bad for shooting them. Almost.

GRITTY UNREALITY OR SCI-FI BY WAY OF 'REAL' WAR

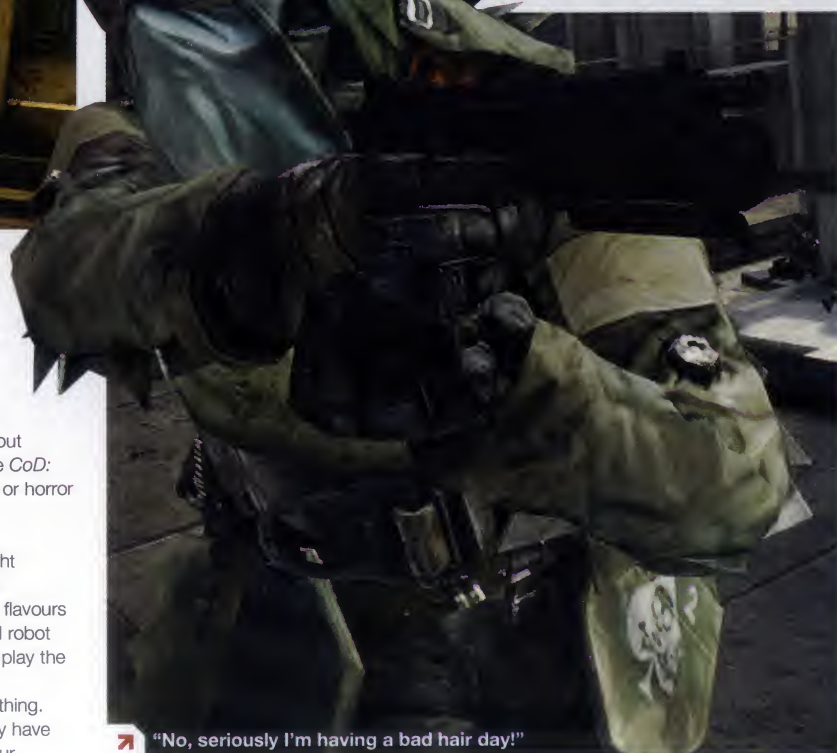
It's unusual to call a game set in the future realistic, but you get the feeling that this is how it would – or rather could – go down.

Recently the topic of the massive gap between, say, *Call of Duty* and *Resistance 2* was raised in the office. Both are war games, but *Resistance 2* is, obviously, a huge monster-filled explosion fest. We chatted long into the night about how awesome it would be to have *CoD*: *WaW*-style realism used in a sci-fi or horror context.

Killzone 2 is that game.

That's not to say you won't fight imaginative enemies, you will. The oversized Helghast come in many flavours and sizes, there's an insanely hard robot boss that flies around and... well, play the game and see.

But these all feel part of something. The Helghast are consistent – they have a plan. It makes sense – as do your



➤ "No, seriously I'm having a bad hair day!"

RADEC YOU BASTARD, JUST DIE!

As much of a dick as Visari is, he's not a fighter (again, like Hitler), but he has Radeck to do his dirty work. Without giving too much away, the fight you have with Radeck may lead you to scream, "HOW YOU LIKE ME NOW, BITCH?!" and grab your crotch. He's a tough little bastard, make no mistake. In fact he may be a contender for a possie in the top 10 boss fights list.



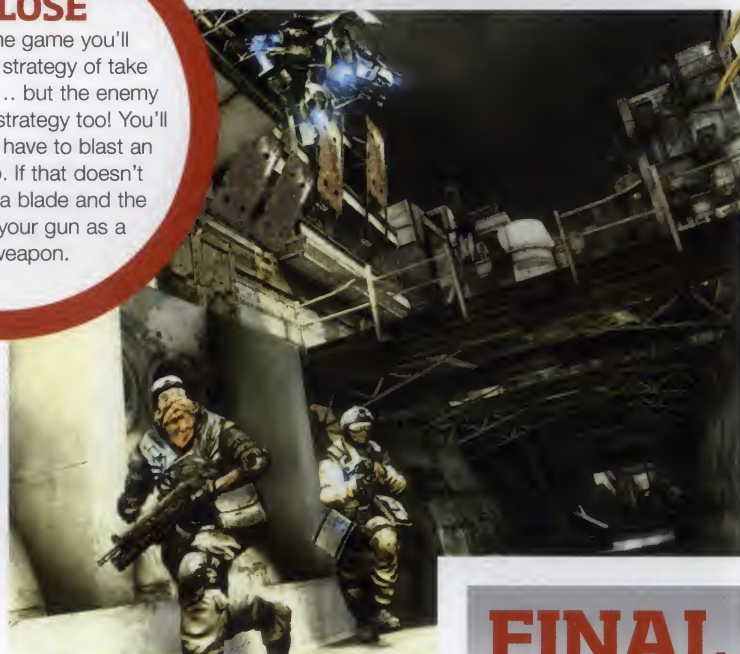
➤ Kapowski's been eating burritos again – run!

UP CLOSE

For most of the game you'll be employing a strategy of take cover, shoot, etc... but the enemy is employing that strategy too! You'll occasionally just have to blast an enemy close up. If that doesn't work, you have a blade and the ability to use your gun as a melee weapon.



➤ Take that Peter Garrett!



objectives. *Res 2*, at times, sends you on seemingly arbitrary missions just so you can fight the cool-looking monster, but *Killzone 2* sends you on missions that make tactical common sense. Okay the glowing-eyed suits are perhaps a tad indulgent, but beyond that, honestly, it never breaks its own rules.

SO, WAS IT WORTH THE WAIT?

Put simply: yes. This is what happens when a developer looks at their product and goes: "it's not ready, let's take our time and make it rock the house!" So what have we got? A story that those who've played the other *Killzones* will appreciate, but it's also a strong stand-alone adventure.

You have an embarrassment of weapons: from the weird bolt gun that can shoot through the bodies of four Hellies and leave a timed explosive on the fourth – turning corpses into macabre corpse-mines – to the high tech grenades that electrocute all nearby. Plus the awesome variety of assault rifles, handguns, machineguns, mounted guns and an

electric blasting gun that is more fun than juggling piglets.

You even get a bit of time in a tank, various gun turrets including one on a space vessel and an absolutely awesome mech suit – one of the highlights, actually.

Excellent level design, impressive audio (although as fun as swearing is, it gets old – when will we see witty soldiers?) and graphics that are possibly the best the PS3 – or indeed any console – has seen.

There are moments where the sheer scope or look of a level/enemy is so good you'll find yourself softly saying: "Wooooooooooooow...!"

The flamethrower for instance, it looked great in *CoD:WaW*, even better in *Far Cry 2* – but the award for best flame effects on an enemy goes to *Killzone 2*. *Far Cry 2* wins on environmental burning, just for the record.

ANYTHING CRAPPY WE SHOULD GIRD OUR LOINS FOR?

There aren't any howlers here, just a few tiny giggles. Sometimes the screen pauses

for a nanosecond. Never during battles, strangely enough, but when you move to a new location.

Enemy AI is almost uniformly brilliant, except every now and then one Hellie will wander off or stay in cover, even if you saunter up and shoot him in the head. But those are giggles soon forgotten in the engaging and compelling single player campaign.

There are so many amazing set pieces – being besieged in a fort stands out as wave after wave of increasingly aggressive soldiers attack your position. Oh and there's the wastelands. Oh and the battle on the super train... oh look, it's all just bloody marvellous.

IN CONCLUSION...

We'll say it again: *Killzone 2* is the best console first person shooter ever. It will be bested one day, and that is as it should be, but this game has set the proverbial bar so high we reckon it'll be the king for a good long while.

Hail to the king, baby.

➤ Anthony O'Connor

FINAL SAY:

- Amazing, fluid graphics and animation
- Beautifully constructed levels and intense, sweaty-palmed combat
- Every now and then the game pauses for a second
- You can't go prone

VERDICT:

Killzone 2 lives up to the hype and should stop the naysayers from saying "nay". The campaign is full of surprises and delivers a good narrative, showing the Helghast as more than cartoony super villains. Just superb.

10

~ Rent or Buy ~

Step Brothers

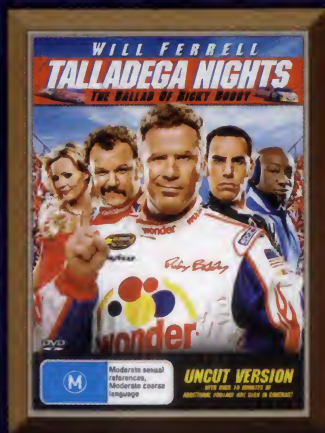
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MOSE

APATON

REGISTRATION

COLUMBIA

PICTURES

1

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SONY
PICTURES
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INFO

GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-6
PRICE: \$99.95

SKATE 2

SKATE or die trying



As kids, games used to be like a magic trick. Your parents would turn on the television, you'd flick the on-switch on your console waiting for the tube to light up the screen in a haze of crude pixelated nonsense, and your heart would beat in anticipation of the experience to come. This was before magazines, before the internet, before ponderous budgets, before the hype train that accompanies every major release these days threatened to derail any natural

sense of wonder that games gave us way back in ye olden days.

But the genius of *SKATE*, above and beyond its incredible control system, beyond the bits and pieces that somehow coagulated into this rewarding game, was its ability to elicit that same feeling of wonder. It was thrown onto our desk without ceremony, thrown onto the PSN as a demo that gamers downloaded idly, with no expectations tainted with hyperbole or hype. Players got to experience *SKATE* as

all games should be experienced – with a wide-eyed wonder that is all but extinct in our hobby of choice.

Our point being? Well, sadly, Black Box's sequel, through virtue of being a sequel, is no longer that unknown quantity, and as a result *SKATE 2* will never be able to create that same sense of discovery. As opposed to the original, it comes swimming in pre-release hype, drowning in expectation, and, to a certain extent, tainted with all the hype and hyperbole

that comes with being the follow-up to what is now looked upon by most as a revolutionary classic.

And in many ways we found ourselves getting caught up with that tsunami of hype: the 60 frames per second hype, with all new tricks, a completely redesigned game map – an evolution of *SKATE* in the natural, seamless direction we all dreamed the game would take. But the real question is this: does *SKATE 2* live up to that insane hype, or does it sink, blubbing beneath



7 He looks like the guy from Fall Out Boy – we hope he lands on his face



WORSE THAN
ACTUAL
SKATEBOARDING



BETTER THAN
SKATE



the familiar, gravity crushing weight of expectation?

WELL? DOES IT?

Well... yes and no. Yes, the game does have its share of issues, mainly PS3-specific problems lingering from the first game (i.e the temperamental frame rate) but for the most part *SKATE* succeeds in taking everything you loved about the original and refining it to a sparkling sheen – taking all your expectations and doing a

decent job of surpassing them.

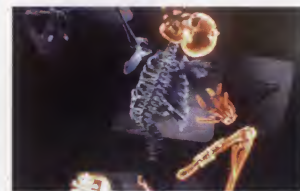
The controls, which always made up the healthy beating heart of *SKATE*, have, as expected, struck the perfect balance between innovation and familiarity. Players used to *SKATE*'s original control set will find themselves at home instantly. At base, everything's exactly as it was, in the same place, so that fans of the first can immediately pick up where they left off.

Unlike in Tony Hawk's, where the control system was added to and

tweaked until it was a bloated incomprehensible mess, *SKATE 2* magically juggles brand new learning curves, in new directions, without affecting the core gameplay. You could, technically, play *SKATE 2* in the exact same way you played its predecessor, but why would you want to? The game now allows you to do more in the most subtle and well-balanced ways.

Added within the tight-knit framework of *SKATE*'s control system, which

WHAT ELSE IS NEW



1 THE HALL OF MEAT

Breaking bones was a regular sport in the original *SKATE*, and this time round *SKATE 2* does a great job of adding new incentives to this practice. Now everything is measured – height, speed, etc, and players also receive benefits for partaking in such tomfoolery.



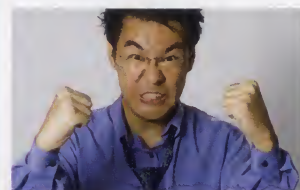
2 BAILS

One of *SKATE*'s few flaws was with regards to the shoddy ragdolls. This time, not only have they been improved, but you've now been given control over your bails. Now you can adjust your body in midair to maximise impact.



3 CHALLENGES

In terms of both the challenges themselves, and the actual layouts, *SKATE 2* surpasses its predecessor with ease. When you dart into the map screen all unlocked challenges are available onscreen and sorted into different categories.



4 LOADING TIMES

Oh thank you sweet baby Jesus. *SKATE*'s loading times were criminal, and possibly the greatest problem in the entire game. After a short install, the loading times in *SKATE 2* have thankfully been reduced dramatically.



5 SKITCHING

Yes, you can now grab onto the back of a car, get up some major speed and launch off into insane leaps. Only to be done whilst listening to Huey Newton and wearing a puffy red bomber jacket. (Disclaimer: you can't make people drive into trucks loaded with manure).

GRAB THE WORLD

Players can now shape New San Vanelona as they see fit!

ENDLESS POTENTIAL

The real magic of being able to move objects around the environment is the ability to reach previously unreachable areas through problem solving and sheer imagination.

CUSTOM MADE

Last time round *SKATE*'s character creation was a bit limited – in *SKATE 2* it's as detailed as they come. Female skaters are now included into the mix.



intelligently places buttons in control of specific limbs and movements, are new movesets such as fingerflips, hippy jumps, handplants and some fancy new footplant tricks that we don't really know the correct names for.

The act of adding tricks such as these could be seen as expected and, to a certain extent, necessary for a sequel, but the real achievement is with regards to how they're implemented. *SKATE 2*'s new trick set feels less like a branching out of the controls, and more like a clicked in jigsaw piece – something that was somehow missing all along, a piece that fits and interlinks perfectly without feeling forced.

For example, the new handplant system interlinks expertly with the concept of the **X** and **O** buttons representing

your 'feet'. If you press either of these buttons your handplant will immediately tweak accordingly.

Those same feet buttons interlink with the grab system, the grab system interlinks with the fingerflip system, and so on and so forth. In *SKATE 2* everything resides perfectly in its place, as if it was written in stone since the beginning of time and was always so. Absolutely nothing feels tacked on.

GRAB THE WORLD

And the same goes for the whole new 'grab the world' system (which in typically seamless fashion uses the 'hand' button, **O**). Of all the additions to *SKATE 2*, this ability to change New San Vanelona to your own specifications worried us most. It harked back to *Tony Hawk's Proving*

Ground, and the poorly implemented 'rigger' system, and this comparison literally sent a cold shiver down our spines.

Of course, we needn't have worried. As opposed to being utilised as an excuse for lazy level design, grabbing the world instead creates situations in the stellar game map that allow for creativity and, to a certain extent, problem solving. Example: after mistakenly falling on top of a small block of flats, we spotted a gap that was just that little bit too long to make via your bog standard ollie.

It was at this point we found ourselves thinking, "what if we had a ramp we could line up?". Then, at that precise moment, we spotted a ramp, tucked away inconspicuously in the corner, just begging to be placed in that perfect position.

Coincidence? Unlikely. The result

of some expert map design? Almost certainly.

It's indicative of what is probably the greatest leap in *SKATE 2*. While fans of the first game will always have a soft spot in their heart for the original, only a fool would contest the fact that New San Vanelona outperforms its predecessor in almost every way possible. The dead areas that existed in the *SKATE* have all but disappeared, leaving a plethora of areas for players to race through.

One of the most compelling aspects of *SKATE* was the ability to scout an area, find an awesome line/ramp/anything, then skate said object to death. This ability remains in full effect for the sequel, but this time round it's almost as if the level designers are completely aware of what you'll spot and when, and have added



➤ Baggy jeans you can trip over – mandatory in skating for some reason



➤ That's the power of love – doo do-do-do doo! The POWER of LOVE!

branching areas that continue to crank up the fun throughout the line.

Remember that one awesome area of *SKATE* where players traversed a whole subsection of tunnels, before being flung head first into a suicidal drop that led into an awesome leap into Old Town? *SKATE 2* is bursting at the seams with areas that evoke precisely that sense of discovery, all without removing the illusion that you are part of a living, breathing city.

A TISSUE FOR YOUR ISSUE

The only issues we have with *SKATE 2* are purely technical – and they're the sole reason why the score below reads nine as opposed to full marks. One of the most enticing aspects of *SKATE 2*, when the game was first announced, was the

promise of 60 frames per second. In the review copy we played (bearing in mind that at time of print, there's still *plenty* of time for this to be fixed) the frame rate was patchy at best, sometimes 60 FPS, more often than not slipping below, and often chugging away at under 30 frames per second.

This may not exactly be a game breaker, but the jolting changes, besides the obvious detriment to the visual fidelity, often made it difficult to pull off the more precise tricks that *SKATE 2* often requires.

But that being said, having played a couple of versions of *SKATE 2* up until this point, we've seen dramatic improvements in how smoothly the game plays, so it could very well be the case that the final, retail copy of *SKATE 2* runs

smoother than a baby's bottom lathered in vegetable oil, after being buffed off with a thick layer of wax – at this stage we have simply no way of knowing.

But minor issues aside, *SKATE 2* is an incredible game. It easily retains the mantle of greatest sports title on the planet, and somehow manages to make what was already seamless an even more satisfying, perfectly balanced experience. The minor creases that existed in the original (such as load times, vague challenge design, relatively empty environments) have been completely blitzed to the point where, if it wasn't for the choppy frame rate, *SKATE 2* would be an almost faultless videogame.

We love it. Absolutely love it. And we're positive that you will too. *SKATE 2* is a must play. **Mark Serrels**

FINAL SAY:

😊 • Seamlessly designed, with incredible controls
• Better city, better trick, better visuals

😞 • Frame rate is choppy
• That's it really!

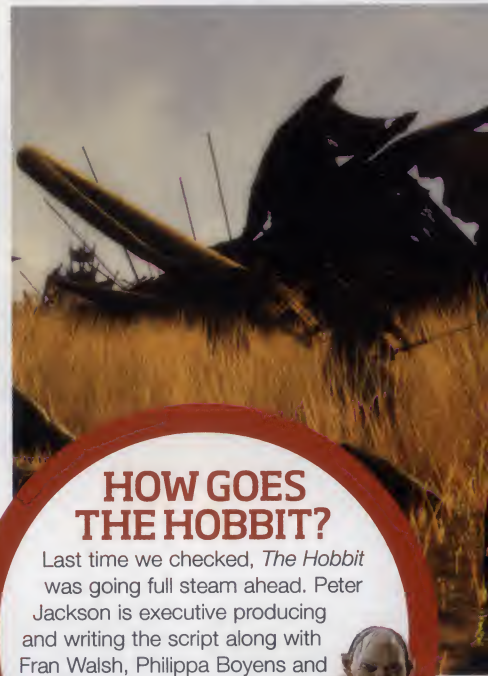
VERDICT:
Undoubtedly the best extreme sports game ever

9



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: PANDEMIC STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1-16
PRICE: \$99.95



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST

This ring has worms

Along with sharing a hot tub and cigar with William Shatner, the right to fiddle with Tolkien's prized masterwork is the sort of opportunity most geeks would sacrifice their left testicle for. What's more, the Tolkien estate in this instance granted not only fiddling rights, but full leeway as *The Lord of the Rings: Conquest* contains an alternate bad-guys campaign that sees Sauron take Frodo, Aragorn and that dream-boat Legolas on a one-way ticket to the taxidermist.

During this campaign the entire land of Middle Earth ends up looking like the burnt arse of a pizza cooked, while Sauron and his fiery Balrog turn the residents of The Shire into the stars of their own midget harem. How sweet.

However, despite such artistic license, *The Lord of the Rings: Conquest* is nothing more than a re-skinned version of poxy console flopper *Star Wars Battlefront*.

In terms of timeline, *Conquest* covers

the main battles seen in Peter Jackson's moneymakers as well as a few noted in the books. Obviously, as an action game the story plays second fiddle to magically teleporting players from battle-to-battle so they can start mistreating their control pad.

Speaking of pad mashing, *Conquest* is bloody simple to play. Not just pick-up-and-play straightforward, but *Forrest Gump* type simple. A third-person romp similar to the PlayStation 2 film tie-in *The Return of the King* that debuted years ago, players are let loose on the battlefield against politely timed releases of Orcs and other mud-covered baddies, and must pummel their way to victory by hammering the attack buttons like a horny chimpanzee pepped up on a sweaty dance-party drug.

The result is a howling dog's breakfast. Entering into a melee requires the sort of tact and finesse last witnessed in the Rodney King beating and there is

a distinct lack of combinations, parry moves and levelling up, which would have added a bit of radish to this dry dish.

To the game's credit, however, players do get to choose from four classes that each perform different roles on the battlefield, including attacking from distance with magic and other tripe.

To be fair – and we do try – it's this palette of possibilities that supplies this title with its modicum of intelligence. What's supposed to happen is that four co-op players hold hands and take to the battlefield as different classes and work out a waterproof strategy. An example would be, say, the Mage shields the stampeding Warrior with his '60s acid shield, while the archers pick blokes off from afar and the Scout skirts around invisibly like a dastardly midget rearing enemies from behind. Wait, that seems to be the only strategy that can be employed.

HOW GOES THE HOBBIT?

Last time we checked, *The Hobbit* was going full steam ahead. Peter Jackson is executive producing and writing the script along with Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens and director Guillermo del Toro. They'll be two films, with an estimated shooting schedule of 370 days!



The other point of contention is how often players are forced to play as Mr Medieval Fodder. These blokes are piss weak in comparison to Aragorn, Gandalf and the rest of the proper line up and, with no provision to level up, seem a bit pointless for any of the game's offline modes. On a sunnier note, a decent range of characters from the films can be used, from the obvious heroes Gandalf, Legolas, and Aragorn, to the Ents and even Sauron and the Balrog on the rotten side.

That said, one doesn't need an IQ like a cricket score to have worked out this isn't for the hermit gamer. Not only does it thrive off the sort of group combat dynamic

Been to Scotland? It's like this

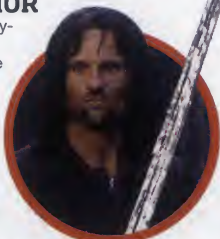


HEAD OF YOUR CLASS

There are four classes of Tolkien hero available both at the start and during each mission. Each have different fancy schmancy stuff they can do, and picking the right geezer for the right part of the fight is critical.

WARRIOR

These puppy-eating bad boys are the best for cutting down waves of enemies like mown lawn and their unique fire sword combinations ensure they rule the melee throne.



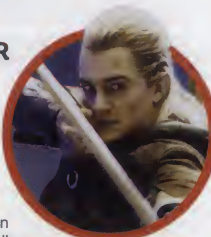
SCOUT

This sneaky little bugger is pretty handy in toe-to-toe combat, but can also turn semi-invisible and sneak behind tough foes for a fatal backstab.



ARCHER

Like good ol' Legolas, these blokes are all about ranged attacks. Archers can spit out fire and poison arrows, as well as three-arrowed multi shots.



MAGE

Cut from the same jig as Gandalf, these spooky blokes cast lightning and fireballs, and can heal allies or shield areas from enemies. Too bad their dress sense is naff.



seen in MMORPGs, but its content is about as anaemic as the Olsen sisters. The truth is players will be able to knock off both campaigns in less time that it takes to cook a roast dinner.

No, the only thing *LOTR: Conquest* has going for it is its multiplayer. Offline co-op splits the screen into four, which would have been impressive if the game didn't look like reflux from the last generation of videogames. At least this setup plays okay, even though the lack of content and generally messy gameplay prevent it from being something players should organise intentionally.

It's not as if *LOTR: Conquest* is really all that shockingly abominable. It's certainly playable in the broadest sense of the word. We're just not confident to recommend it while we're amidst the current season of killer titles. And that's all that matters, really. **James Ellis**

FINAL SAY:



• Some strategic elements for co-op



• Campaign and overall content is weak
• Combat is far too simple
• Visuals fail to impress

VERDICT:

It might offer spurts of fun, but *Lord of the Rings: Conquest* is mediocre in every way.

5

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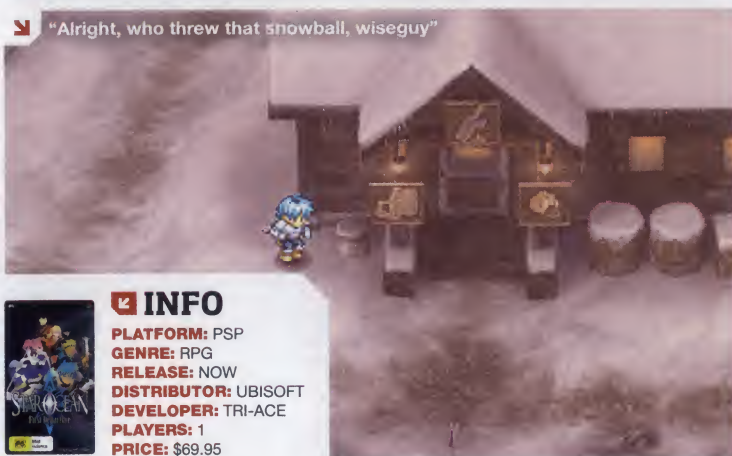
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INFO

PLATFORM: PSP
GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: TRI-ACE
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$69.95



STAR OCEAN: FIRST DEPARTURE

Their first departure - again



The PSP is swiftly becoming the gateway with which PAL gamers can finally gain access to ageing RPGs that never found their way over here, or are exceedingly hard to find – case in both points respectively being *Final Fantasy Tactics: War of the Lions* and *Disgaea: Afternoon of Darkness*. Thankfully they often come 're-imagined' and otherwise boasting a few extra bits and pieces. The latest in this lengthening line of lost treasures is the very first game in the galaxy-spanning *Star Ocean* series, *Star Ocean: First Departure*.

It's likely you've never had the opportunity to play this one either, as its legacy pre-dates even that of the humble PlayStation – this baby started life on the Super Nintendo all the way back in 1996, and was never released outside Japan. The fact that it's over a decade old

shouldn't and doesn't mean a thing unless you've got beef with top-down 2D sprites – it was a must-play then, and it's even more of a must-play in its second and smaller coming.

PAST AND PRESENT AND FUTURE

The *Star Ocean* series has always been unique for several reasons, and immediately striking is *First Departure*'s strangely appealing marriage of traditional sword 'n' sorcery aesthetics with almost overbearing science fiction mandates. You'll be hit with both upon entering, but it is the fantasy side of things that comes to dominate a large percentage of the game.

Our plucky protagonist is Roddick, a young Fellpool going nowhere slowly alongside his chums as a sentry in the Clatos, a small town stuck next to some

woods on the medieval planet of Roak.

It's a sleepy existence, but things start to wake up just a little when a mystery plague drops in from out of nowhere and starts turning townsfolk into stone. Naturally, Roddick and crew head to a nearby mountain in search of a theoretical cure, and it's cue the sudden appearance of Ronyx and Ilia. Who? Two members of a Terran Alliance reconnaissance mission, who come equipped with crazy futuristic technology and the revelation that this 'plague' is actually a biological weapon with a million-yard stare, and it's going to take hours upon hours of old-school adventuring to reduce it to a harmless string of airborne proteins. But wait, it gets trippier: it turns out that the only way to save Roak is to retrieve a particular genetic sample from the same planet... somewhere in the past.

VINTAGE MODERN

Being that *First Departure* originated in the '90s, gameplay is extremely traditional and has only really been 'modernised' with the inclusion of lovely anime cutscenes, anime-style character portraits and solid voice acting. When tramping around the place with your party of four, think *Final Fantasy VI* or *Chrono Trigger* – cute, big-headed sprites and picturesque, albeit static, backgrounds.

During combat, things move a little closer to Namco's *Tales* series, with the fight breaking to real-time. You control one of your party and the AI handles the remaining three. Tonking enemies is as easy as hammering buttons for whacks with a weapon or the L and R buttons for pre-set special movies.

It's a little different and does keep you on your toes, but *First Departure*'s most

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A STAR BY ANY OTHER NAME

For some bizarre and seemingly pointless reason, all of the characters have had their names altered slightly from the original. Roddick used to be Ratix, Dorne was Dorn, Millie was Milly, Illia was Iria, Ronyx was Ronixis... er, why bother, lads? What was wrong with the old ones?



interesting feature is the 'Private Action'. 'Private Actions' are initiated by pressing **Ⓢ** outside a town, allowing Roddick to converse with different members of the party personally, changing the flow of the story and revealing ever more backstory on each of them. It's worth noting that it's impossible to get all playable characters in your party in one play-through, and there are two secret characters as well – so with an average playtime of 30 hours each time around, if you want to see it all that's some pretty decent replay value right there.

For what it lacks in the sophistication and storytelling of more contemporary RPGs, *First Departure* is such a fine example of a traditional RPG moving way ahead of its time it's definitely worth bunking down with your PSP for a dose of old-school cool. **Toby McCasker**

FINAL SAY:

- Great synthesis of styles
- 'Private Actions' are rad
- Narrative lacks flair
- Characters are occasionally bland

VERDICT:
Roak awaits!

7

INTERMISSION

On the box



CINEMAS DIRECTOR: OLIVIER MEGATON | CAST: JASON STATHAM, NATALYA RUDAKOVA AND FRANÇOIS BERLÉAND | IN CINEMAS: FEB 5

TRANSPORTER 3 (M)

Anthing with a number tacked on the end will inevitably follow a formula, and it's understandable, because if it ain't broke, don't fix it! Though this new edition throws in a fresh pair of eyes, with a new director steering this fist-to-face action flick.

Returning is Frank Martin, ready to rack up numerous kilometres taking valuable packages across borders, only this time his cargo is the Ukrainian environment minister's daughter, Valentina. A freckly faced redhead with a bomb strapped to her wrist, if she strays too far from the car, KABOOM!

The *Transporter* series was never

created to push the grey matter; it is simple, straightforward, often silly and, more often than not, brutal. Martin is a stripped back Bond minus a big gadget-filled, cash-heavy corporation to pump him up. So what if this self-made hero isn't suave, the fight scenes are quick, with fists hitting their mark, car chases aplenty and one life-threatening situation after another.

VERDICT:

Fists fly, girls swoon and people end up bloodied. Money well spent!

7



ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Valkyrie (MA15+)

Director: Bryan Singer

Cast: Tom Cruise and Bill Nighy

In 1944, a plot went awry to assassinate the most merciless political leader that the world has ever seen, Adolf Hitler. Even with Tom Cruise at the helm, as Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, this well-acted, well-written film is a fascinating look at a little known event.

The Unborn (M)

Director: David S. Goyer

Cast: Odette Yustman and Gary Oldman

Twins are evil and we all know it! They're said to be able to read each other's minds and they've always got someone to blame – each other. In this supernatural thriller the main character, Casey, is tormented by her unborn twin who believes that her death will bring about her life.

Underworld: Rise of The Lycans (MA15+)

Director: Patrick Tatopoulos

Cast: Michael Sheen and Rhona Mitra

A prequel to the original *Underworld*, the film traces the origins of the original characters and how the Lycans' centuries-old blood feud began.



THE BUZZ

What's really going on behind-the-scenes

With cinemas struggling to get burns on seats, 2009 and 2010 look set to be the years of prequels and sequels.

Those into sci-fi are likely to cringe at the remake of John Carpenter's *They Live*, along

with oldies such as *Planet 51* and *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

We'll also finally see a sequel to *Donnie Darko*, which is unlikely to clarify anything about the rabbit and the wormhole. *S.Darko*

takes place seven years after the original and will follow Donnie's younger sister Samantha.

Finally, *Romancing the Stone* is being remade; quick, hide this fact from everyone you know!

MOVIES OF 2009

The 10 movies that are most likely to see you picking popcorn out of every orifice after a good scare or laugh - eight of which will have spin-off games.

TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN

Witwicky returns in *T:RoF* with the crew from the original film. Humans and robots again fight for balance, but with a bigger budget and more special effects.



TERMINATOR SALVATION

Salvation will have the man of the moment, Christian Bale, in a film set in 2018 that is strangely devoid of time-travel/kill John Connor formula.



AVATAR

Man and alien become one as James Cameron's 3D sci-fi film, *Avatar*, takes place during an interplanetary war. With a budget of \$300 million, we expect a lot.



X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

Hugh Jackman plays the clawed Wolverine with mutant sideburns, focusing on the character's violent past and relationship with fellow mutant Sabretooth.



MONSTERS VS. ALIENS

Our money's on monsters, as Dreamworks takes an incredibly-inspired look at an age-old question, with voice cast including Reese Witherspoon growing 49ft 11in.



WATCHMEN

Legends Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons take us to an alternate view of 1985 (disclaimer: this movie isn't *Back to the Future*) with epic heroes thrown into the cold war.



PUBLIC ENEMIES

Johnny Depp is the iniquitous John Dillinger on a crime spree during the Great Depression. With the FBI on his heels he skirts around the country till a final shootout occurs.



STAR TREK

J.J. Abrams takes the eleventh Trekkie film to the Starfleet Academy as Kirk meets Spock and they run off to battle Romulans. Awww!



THE SPIRIT

Frank Miller, the man behind *Sin City*, turns his inimitable style towards a newspaper strip about a man who dies and is reborn a superhero.



GI JOE: RISE OF COBRA

A real American hero becomes more than just a toy, as characters from throughout the franchise unite to battle the newly formed Cobra organisation.



On the box...

BLU-RAY DIRECTOR: MAKOTO KAMIYA | CAST: PAUL MERCIER AND ALYSON COURT

RESIDENT EVIL: DEGENERATION (MA15+)



While the movies don't quite have the same insane fanfare as the games, *Resident Evil: Degeneration* takes a little of both and produces a quite adequate link between the two for fanboys and fangirls alike.

"What really happened at Raccoon City?" is the question on the lips of many Americans with the President's links to Umbrella being taken into consideration. Two companies, Terrasave and Wilpharma, who are meant to fight against 'Bio Terror' events, also take centre stage and fight to prove who is the most worthwhile to the nation.

The T-Virus once again takes centre stage in *Degeneration* as a planeload of infected people crash into an international airport. Inside that airport is Claire Redfield, fresh-ish from Raccoon

City, trapped and in need of a hero, as Leon S Kennedy steps in as her saviour.

While the film starts off feeling like an extended cutscene, kind of like playing *Metal Gear Solid 4*, it slowly starts to hold its own. Instead of the sharper, higher contrast look of *Resident Evil 5*, they've opted for a colour palette closer to 4 with some nice allusions to the game, such as when Claire picks up an umbrella as a weapon and we switch to first person mode.

Enclosed space and the hungry infected make it worth a look, plus it sets up a few of the big storylines for *Resident Evil 5*.



EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:
A great mix of gaming and movie moments. A good way to prepare for RES

7



PINEAPPLE EXPRESS (MA15+)

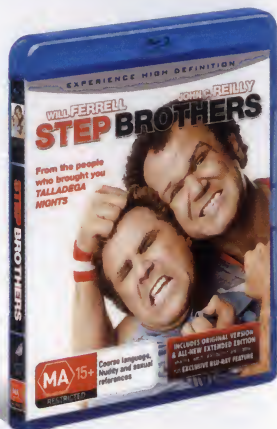
Director: David Gordon Green
Cast: Seth Rogen and James Franco

The thing to learn from this film is that if your weed has a name – and you smoke too much of it – you'd better get running. Witnessing a murder perpetrated by a crooked cop sends a man and his dealer on the run from everyone.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:
All aboard if you're looking for a loopy laugh

6



STEP BROTHERS (MA15+)

Director: Adam McKay
Cast: Will Ferrell and John C Reilly

Seems that being spoilt isn't age reliant, nor is it cute at 39 years of age. *Step Brothers* is an average movie by two generally hilarious comedians, about enemies united against a common foe – the successful big brother.

EXTRAS: 7

VERDICT:
We blame the plaid!

5



HALLOWEEN (R18+)

Director: Rob Zombie
Cast: Scout Taylor-Compton and Tyler Mane

Possibly the one case where zombies and horror doesn't really work! Rob Zombie takes control of this once terrifying franchise and makes it... adequately scary! Michael Myers may need to retire after this mostly pointless remake. Do yourself a favour and watch the original instead.

EXTRAS: 8

VERDICT:
The original is still champ!

5



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY... WANTED

Guns, Angelina, reference filled!

DVD CREATOR: TINA FEY | CAST: ALEC BALDWIN AND TINA FEY

30 ROCK: SEASON TWO (MA15+)



Having already built herself a reputation on *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) Tina Fey's first season of *30 Rock* generated murmurs but not adoration. Fans weren't quick to embrace characters that were almost too quirky, while the storylines twisted in and out in an often confusing manner.

However, by the time Season Two rolled around Fey's character, Liz Lemon, the writer of a late night skit show, was cemented as the perfect straight woman for a series saturated with smart lines and amusing satire.

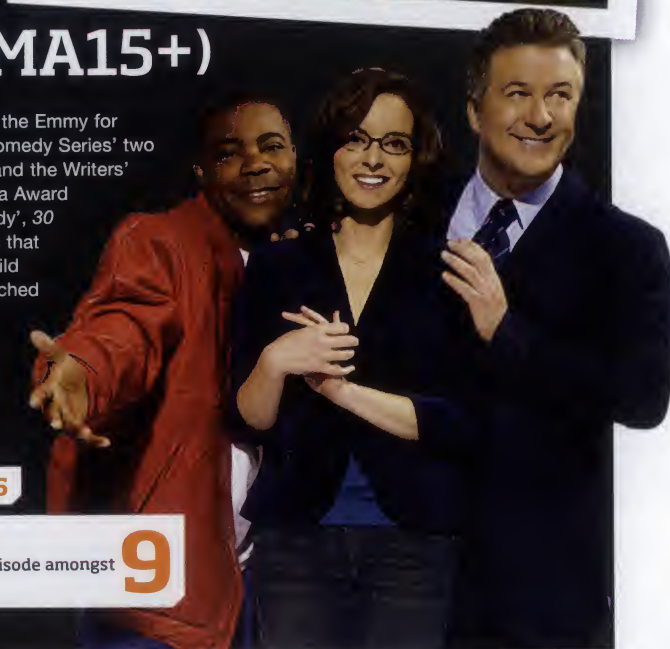
30 Rock is rich with guest appearances – for example, Jerry Seinfeld, after he hears he is to be digitally inserted into every NBC program, and David Schwimmer playing *Greenzo*, an actor hired to promote environmental consciousness.

Having won the Emmy for 'Outstanding Comedy Series' two years running, and the Writers' Guild of America Award for 'Best Comedy', *30 Rock* is a series that continues to build and is best watched continuously instead of broken up by bad TV programming.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
Not a lemon episode amongst them all!

9



LOST BOYS 2: THE TRIBE (R18+)

Director: P.J.Pesce

Cast: Tad Hilgenbrink and Angus Sutherland

Waiting 20 years to release this deadbeat sequel when films like *Twilight* are eating up the box office shows how out of date this surfing, bloodlust movie is.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
Lacks the original's classic themes

5



ROBOT CHICKEN SEASON 3 (MA15+)

Creator: Seth Green and Matthew Senreich

Cast: Seth Green

This twisted stop motion satire runs at a stupidly fast pace as it moves through various topics from celebrity to toys to whatever is cool with the kids for that exact minute.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:
Continues in the fine vein of its predecessors

7



THE DEVIL'S CHAIR (M)

Director: Adam Mason

Cast: Andrew Howard

Drugs and an abandoned asylum with a twisted looking electric fetish machine, what could possibly go wrong? No, sadly this is not pornography, it's a horror film where the messed-up victim can't help but return to the scene of the crime for more untold horrors.

EXTRAS: 7

VERDICT:
Lacks on the thriller front!

4



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Mighty Boosh or Arrested Development
for cringe humour!

INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

LATEST

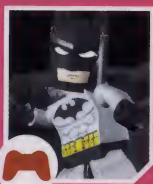
Download this...

Rock Band



Rock Band is here and, if you happen to have a copy of the disc, visiting the store is mandatory – so much awesome.

LEGO Batman demo



We liked it. In fact it's kinda hard not to like LEGO games. Give LEGO Batman a try with this new demo on the store.

Pain



Help pay for the Hoff's debilitating addiction to alcoholic substances by picking up this expansion.

LocoRoco 2 demo



At the very least you should check out the demo for this charming game on the PSP – you owe it to your soul!

Dead Space demo



Possibly too little too late for this sadly overlooked gem of a game. Check out one of the best games of 2008.

NEWS

SACKFIGHTER

Street Fighter IV gets a kick in the sack



In what is seemingly becoming a common occurrence, another title is strapping itself firmly to the *LittleBigPlanet* bandwagon and that game is, surprisingly enough, *Street Fighter IV*.

Yep, along with Sephiroth, Snake, the Helghast and numerous other game characters, we'll be getting a Sack-Chun-li, a Sack-Guile, a Sack-Ryu and best of all a Sackboy version of that sneaky

cold war Russian relic Zangief.

While you'll have to pay a small nominal fee for the privilege, these little buggers may well be the first Sackboy downloadable characters we'd be willing to shell out for.

Imagine an awesome *Street Fighter* themed *LittleBigPlanet* level with these characters – it would be LittleBigAwesome (sorry).

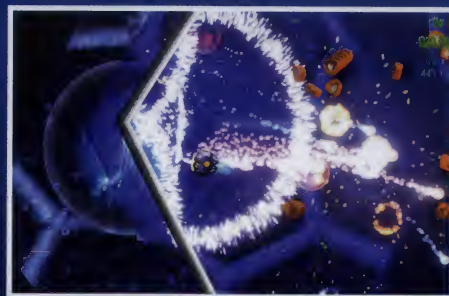
HOME TIME

Home makes good on its promise

We were starting to get a bit pissed off with the constant delays to *home*. And with little to no word coming out of Sony, we expected that the "100% guarantee" that *home* would be released before 2009 was more like a 0% guarantee.

Turns out that the wily little strumpet that is Sony Computer Entertainment was holding out on us – as we awoke one fine morning to find out from our friends at Sony that *home* would be released that very day, on the 11th of December.

So it's good news. Technically, the *home* release is a public beta that everyone has access to, but it's a beta that will be constantly updated. We're looking forward to seeing how *home* evolves in the coming months.



TROPHIES 'FACTORED' IN

We're having a blast

Remember that game *Blast Factor*? No? Well, we could hardly blame you. It was an early dual stick shooter that appeared on the PSN, only to be immediately surpassed by far superior examples such as *Super Stardust HD* and *Everyday Shooter*.

Well regardless, for some strange reason this title, along with the more recognisable *Echochrome*, is next on the list for a trophy update. We welcome this move, but can't help but think that there may be some titles (*Metal Gear Solid 4* dammit!) that are more in need of some added trophy goodness.

On the PSN side of things, we're hanging for some *Pixel Junk Monsters* trophies. Any excuse to play that sweet, sweet game once again.



ONLINE REVIEWS

SUPERSTARDUST PORTABLE

Takin' it old school

In the words of many a fictional pirate, yarr. We really can't make up our minds about *SuperStardust Portable*. On the one hand, we couldn't help but resent the fact that the PSN version is an infinitely more playable version, yet on the other we fully recognise that it represents a decent attempt at transposing the game to the PSP despite limitations.

The core of the issue is this – it's difficult to port a twin stick shooter across to a format that doesn't have twin sticks. The slick shooting mechanics managed by the second analogue stick on the SIXAXIS/DualShock 3 have been clumsily represented by the face buttons, and while this control method is functional, it's hardly ideal.

This is compounded by the fact that switching weapons is handled by either the select button, or the d-pad, which essentially means that you either have to stop moving or (gasp) stop shooting to switch weapons, and this is a real issue.

But it would be wrong to write off the game for these reasons alone, *SSP* – like it's older brother



– is compulsive gaming at its best, shoehorned into a control mechanism that doesn't quite work. But, ultimately, due to the PSP's limitations, it couldn't really have worked any other way.

VERDICT:

A respectable attempt at pulling a decent port – but it can't match the original

7

BIOSHOCK CHALLENGE ROOMS

Room to grow

After waiting a year for *BioShock*, and still being asked to pay over a hundred bucks for what was essentially a rough port of the 360 original, a strong argument could be made stating that these 'Challenge Rooms' should really have been on the retail disc in the first place.

The first two, 'The 'I' in Team' and 'A Shocking Turn of Events' are puzzle based affairs, which have you scrounging around environments solving puzzles and the like. It's a different sort of experience from the original *BioShock*, a more slow paced and focused one, with a sharper focus on level design.

The third, 'Worlds of Hurt', is more intriguing, a survival challenge that plays on *BioShock*'s shooter roots. All in all they're worth a play – but we can't help but feel a little ripped off.



VERDICT:

Well made and designed as you'd expect – but should have been on the game disc

8

LOLGASM

Doing it for the lulz...



THE GUN SHOW

GOOGLE: Call of Duty 4 gun sounds



DEAD SPACE

GOOGLE: Dead Space Parody

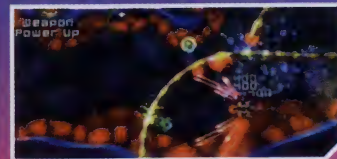


DEATH RACE

GOOGLE: GTA best death moments

WE WANT IT!

It's been a while since we've seen an absolute humdinger of a PSN game hit the PlayStation store. This is why we need these bad boys to come out sooner rather than later...



Astro Tripper

This is a new one, but we've been hankerin' for a side scrolling shooter, ever since that cool remake of *Gradius* on *LBP* – maybe this could fill the void?



Fat Princess

We don't have a release date for this yet, but surely it can't be that far from being unveiled? This intriguing RTS-esque game has our interest thoroughly piqued.



flOwer

Will probably fall into the 'it's not a game, it's an experience' category, but after being won over by *flOw*, we can't wait to 'experience' *flOwer*.

PIXEL JUNK

http://www.pixeljunk.jp

PixelJunk

Mmmm... rumours state that the next PixelJunk game will be *PixelJunk Dungeons*... maybe a hi-res update of *Gauntlet* style gameplay is en-route to the PSN?

MOBILE MISSION

Around two-thirds of Australians have mobile phones, with the list of features expanding yearly.

INQ

If you wake up in the morning and check your Facebook for how many zombies have attacked you overnight or if someone has deemed you interesting enough to comment on your status, then the INQ is the broadband solution for you!

Providing instant notifications from your favourite social networking sites, Skype, Messenger and your email, the INQ has a 3.2 megapixel camera, MP3 player and 327 hours standby, so you're always about to stalk your loved ones.

3 Mobile prepaid

\$179



NOKIA 5320 XPRESSMUSIC

Not to be left behind, Nokia's XpressMusic sleek design provides a music and entertainment package. 3G/HSPDA connectivity provide a faster data transfer and you can hook into N-Gage optimising 8-way Navi keys for gameplay.

RRP: \$379

NOKIA N96

For the multimedia moguls out there, this five megapixel camera with Carl Zeiss optics has 24GB of memory, preloaded N-Gage gaming access and a 2.8" display screen. The big screen lets you access your latest YouTube adventures or Nokia TV.

RRP: \$1,349

LG RENIOR KC910

We all know there is that *other* touchphone, but with a whopping 8.0 megapixel camera and 3.0" touchscreen, this multimedia experience has Dolby music and built-in support for Wi-Fi and GPS. Quite a sweet little tool for those that like their blingin' gadgets!

RRP: \$799

MOTOROLA EM325

Yeah, we all have iPods, but for the musically minded the EM325 gives you one-touch access to your MP3 library and FM radio with 2GB of removable microSDTM memory. Best of all it supports music playtime of up to 11 hours.

**Vodafone
prepaid**

\$99



Some guys see the light – this guy is the light

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Become a member of gaming royalty with our guide

When you completely reinvent a series, fans are going to be understandably anxious. Luckily, what Ubisoft has done with *Prince of Persia* is create a completely new adventure that is just as impressive and compelling as the previous games in the series.

You'll never die in *Prince of Persia*; Elika is always there to grab your hand and magically pull you to safety, but that's not to say that the game is a walk in the park. Throughout its environments you'll find some truly challenging moments, particularly the boss fights.

Luckily, we've completed the game, so

let us guide you through some of its more challenging areas.

COMBAT

There are four attacks in the game, each one mapped to one of the face buttons. The timing window for these attacks is very large, given the heavily-animated nature of the game, so it's possible to queue up combos well in advance of what's happening on screen.

The **△** button initiates a sword attack, the **⬆** brings Elika into the fray, the **Ⓢ** button makes the Prince go the grope with a grab move and the **ⓧ** button is used for

acrobatic moves.

Things get more interesting when enemies enter into particular defence states. These all have corresponding animations and during each one the enemy can only be hurt by specific attacks. Generally, if an enemy glows blue it can be hurt by sword attacks, if it glows orange it can be damaged with grab moves and if it is surrounded by corruption tendrils you need to use Elika to attack.

POWER PLATES

The power plates in the game are essential for reaching all of the fertile grounds in

each area. There are four types of plates and they are unlocked by collecting enough light seeds to activate them.

The order in which you activate the plates is completely up to you – simply highlight the plate icon on your map screen to see which areas have that particular plate in them.

The first plate will cost 60 light seeds. Subsequent plates will require many more seeds to activate – 170, 340 and 540, respectively. Seeing as there are just over 1,000 light seeds in the game, collecting only half of them shouldn't be too difficult for most players.

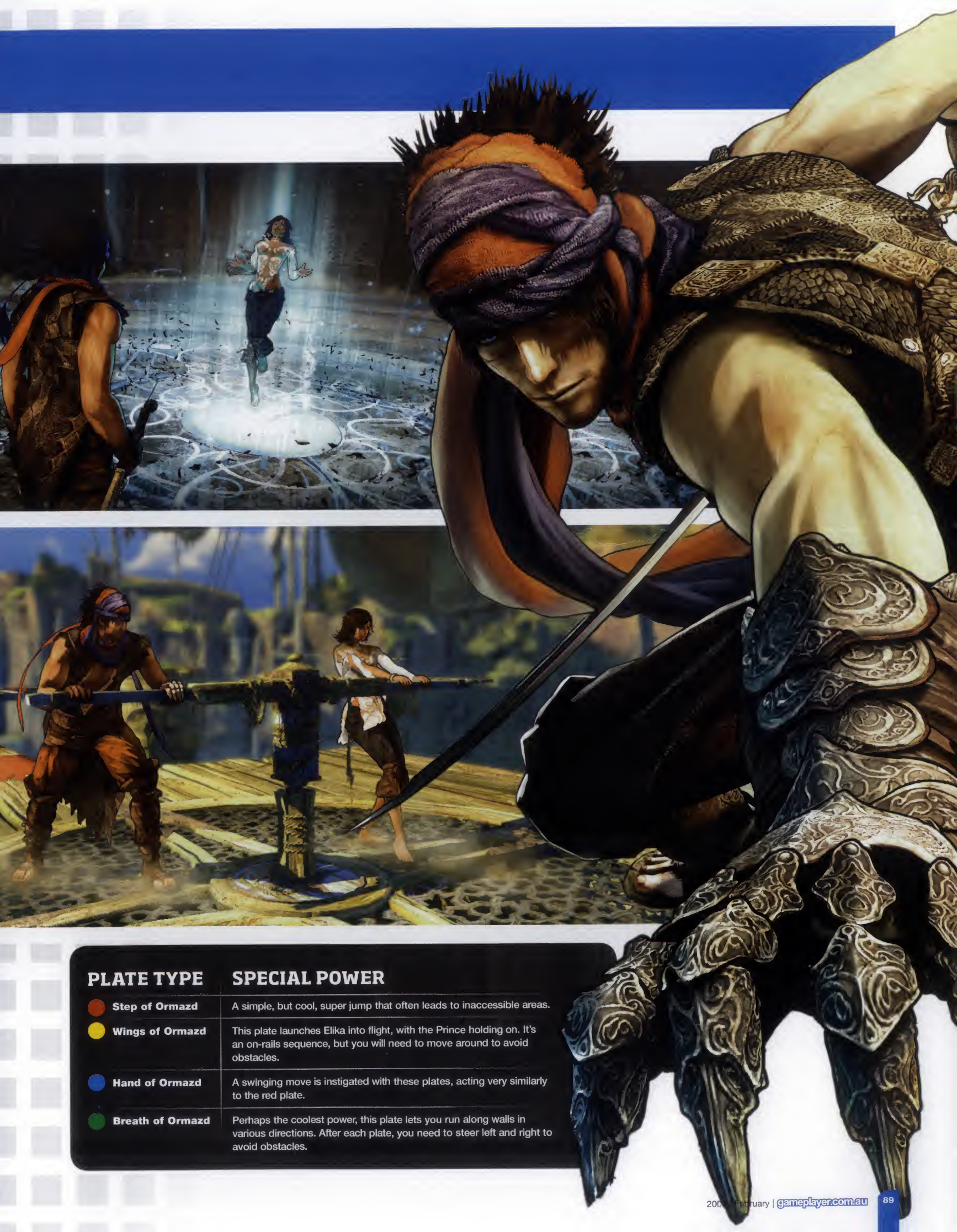


PLATE TYPE

SPECIAL POWER

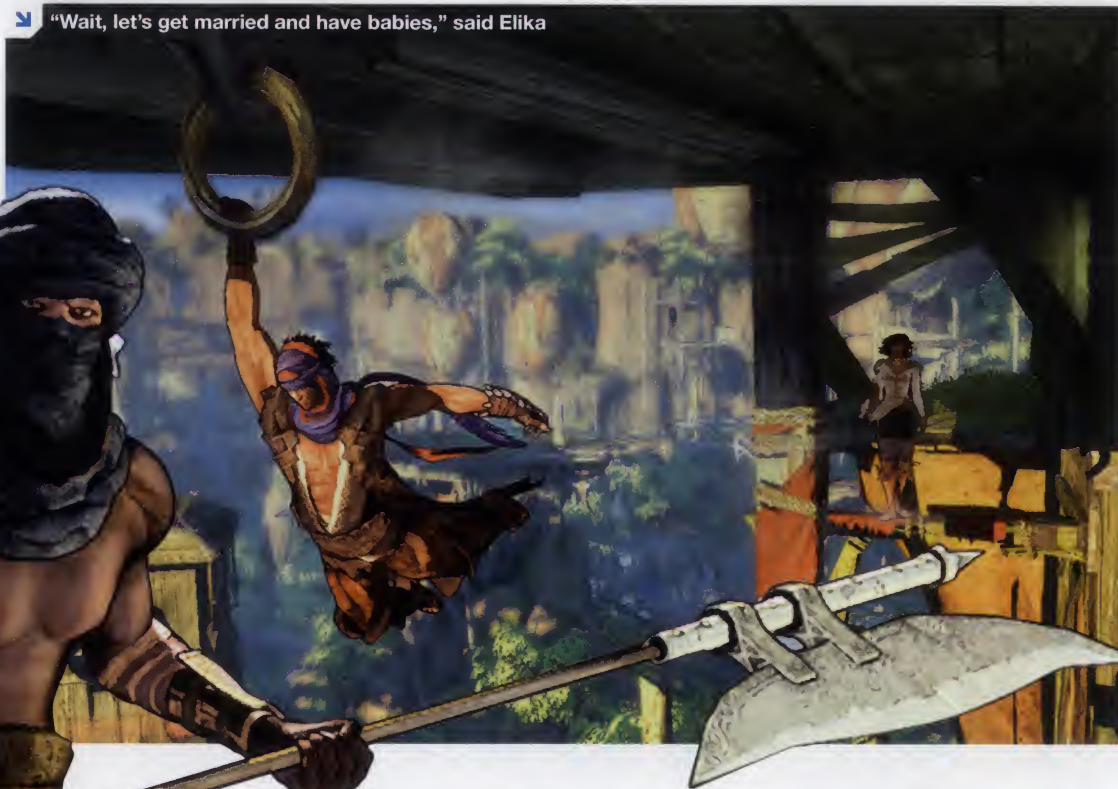
● Step of Ormazd	A simple, but cool, super jump that often leads to inaccessible areas.
● Wings of Ormazd	This plate launches Erika into flight, with the Prince holding on. It's an on-rails sequence, but you will need to move around to avoid obstacles.
● Hand of Ormazd	A swinging move is instigated with these plates, acting very similarly to the red plate.
● Breath of Ormazd	Perhaps the coolest power, this plate lets you run along walls in various directions. After each plate, you need to steer left and right to avoid obstacles.

▶ "Did you put your sunscreen on? I forgot again"



▶ "That's the only ring you're getting" said the Prince (oh, you!)

▶ "Wait, let's get married and have babies," said Elika



THE HUNTER

This boss haunts the Ruined Citadel region. He's a fairly straightforward enemy to defeat, although he does have a nasty habit of spitting black

corruption at you, obscuring the screen for several seconds. It's best

to block during this and wait for it to clear.

In terms of defeating The Hunter, we found that long combos work quite well – start out with a couple of sword attacks, use Elika twice, grab him, and then alternate between Elika and sword attacks. If you can get him to an edge, you'll also do extra damage by mashing the **Ⓢ** button during the quick time event.

THE ALCHEMIST

Funnily enough, we actually managed to bypass many of our fights with The Alchemist by knocking him off the edge of the platform early on in each encounter. If you can herd him towards the edge, keep it in mind. Otherwise, just grind him down via a combination of attacks, being careful to note his different defence states.

THE CONCUBINE

This boss is a bit of a pain. She uses

illusions a lot, making you run after her several times before finally allowing you to attack her. She brings a new move to the mix (which is subsequently used by some other bosses) – she will activate a magical power (purple in colour) that reverses your in-game movements. This is slightly annoying, but not that difficult to overcome. In one of her later battles, you need to jump off of the platform to get Elika to save you.

THE WARRIOR

This is one of the more difficult bosses, because he cannot be hurt by normal attacks. For his early battles you need to lure him to the edge of the platform and then push him off (using the provided QTE). One battle sees you having to lead him into collapsible scaffolding several times. Another requires you to push him



into an open cage and trap him. The final battle will weaken The Warrior and he will appear on fire. Avoid his attacks and wait for his energy to disappear to defeat him for good.

ELIKA'S FATHER

This imposing figure will pop up a few times, particularly when you come back to the temple to activate power plates. He gets a bit more difficult towards the end of the game, because he is able to use both the spitting corruption and reverse-controls moves of the other corrupted bosses. You will face Elika's father for a final time at the end of the game, right before your battle with Ahriman.

AHRIMAN

Upon entering the temple you'll be greeted with a camera angle that looks through Ahriman's eyes. You need to move around the outside of the central chamber and activate the healing grounds in order to weaken the evil god.

Move to the right and avoid the two attacks that Ahriman uses. The first is a high wave of corruption that will



incapacitate the prince on contact. This is preceded with a warning wave, so stick to the glowing plates to avoid getting caught. Once they subside, keep moving. The second attack is a punch from Ahri-man's alarmingly large fist. If you're constantly moving you should avoid it just fine.

Once you've healed the third and last ground, climb up the wall and activate the red power plates to land inside Ahri-man's mouth. Mash the **A** button to trap the god once more and pass the game!

EXTRA ENDING

After defeating Ahri-man, the credits will roll, but there's an extra ending that you can activate. You'll be carrying Erika (who has died) in your arms. Head out of the temple and place her body outside. Four trees will then appear within in the desert region. Head over and cut all of them down.

This will open up the temple again, so head back inside and this time cut down the Tree of Life. The Prince will grab hold of a large light seed (which counts to your tally). Take this back to Erika's body to revive her and watch the final scene.

— Dylan Burns

TROPHY	TYPE	TIPS
Wallrunner	Bronze	Complete the Canyon section at the start of the game.
Use the Compass	Bronze	Set a destination on your map and then press the A button in the game.
Explorer	Bronze	This should unlock at the end of the game.
Block Master	Bronze	Block 50 attacks.
Deflect Master	Bronze	Deflect 50 attacks.
Sword Master	Bronze	Perform 14 hits in one combo. Here is one suggested combo: Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ , Ⓢ . That should be enough to pull it off.
Improviser	Bronze	Use the environment against an enemy. This will be accomplished in one of the boss battles where breakable pillars or scaffolding is present.
Up Against It	Bronze	Win a wall mini-game (QTE) in combat.
Ruined Citadel Runner	Bronze	Run from the Sun Temple's Fertile Ground to the Fertile Ground in Windmills in five minutes.
Vale Runner	Bronze	Run between the Fertile Grounds in the Construction Yards and Heaven's Stair in six minutes.
Warrior Special	Bronze	Dodge the Warrior's attacks 20 times in battle. You need to roll before he hits you.
Hunter Special	Bronze	Deflect the Hunter's attacks five times in one battle.
Alchemist Special	Bronze	Defeat the Alchemist without using the acrobatic attack - Ⓢ
Concubine Special	Bronze	Defeat the Concubine without using grab - Ⓢ
Light Seeds Finder	Bronze	Collect 100 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Collector	Bronze	Collect 200 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Provider	Bronze	Collect 300 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Locator	Bronze	Collect 400 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Harvester	Bronze	Collect 500 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Hoarder	Bronze	Collect 600 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Gatherer	Bronze	Collect 700 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Accumulator	Bronze	Collect 800 Light Seeds
Light Seeds Protector	Bronze	Collect 900 Light Seeds
Speed Kill	Bronze	Kill 10 generic enemies before they spawn (reach the black ooze and press Ⓢ to do a sword attack)
Throw Master	Bronze	Throw 10 Soldiers of Ahri-man into pits (get them against the edge and complete the QTE).
Assassin View	Bronze	Go to the Martyr's Tower, slide down the wall to the left of where you spawn, go outside and look for a wooden ledge sticking out. Walk onto it.
Titanic View	Bronze	Go to the Machinery Ground and walk onto the wooden ledge.
In Harmony	Bronze	500 co-op jumps.
Precious Time	Bronze	At the end of the game, with Erika in your arms, stand still for one minute.
Where's That Temple	Bronze	Talk to Erika (Ⓢ)
Getting to Know You	Bronze	Keep talking to Erika
Good Company	Bronze	Talk to Erika multiple times
Climbing to New Heights!	Bronze	Reach the highest point in the world. This will unlock during the final fight with the Alchemist.
Sinking to New Depths!	Bronze	Find the lowest point in the world. This one's easy, just go behind the temple and drop into the small alcove.
Speed Demon	Bronze	Finish the game in under 12 hours.
Combo Specialist	Bronze	Find every combo in the game. There are too many for us to list here, but keep on using the four attacks creatively.
Heal the Land	Silver	Awarded when you heal the first fertile grounds.
Royal Palace Runner	Silver	Run between the Fertile Grounds in the Royal Gardens and Coronation Halls in four minutes.
City of Light Runner	Silver	Run between the Fertile Grounds in the Tower of Ahri-man and City of Light in seven minutes.
Light Seeds Master	Silver	Collect 1,001 Light Seeds – you need 1,000 before you finish the game and get the final one.
Saviour of the City of Light	Gold	Heal the final fertile grounds.
Be gentle with her	Gold	Erika saves you fewer than 100 times in the whole game. A tough one during your first play through, so perhaps save it for a second run.
Master	Platinum	Unlock all the other trophies in the game.
		Secret Trophies
Into the Storm...	Bronze	Enter the canyon at the start of the game.
Saved	Bronze	Get saved by Erika for the first time.
Now who's the Hunter?	Bronze	Kill the Hunter in his Lair.
Death of a Warrior King	Bronze	Kill the Warrior in his Fortress.
Death of a Concubine	Bronze	Kill the Concubine in her Palace.
Traitor's End	Bronze	Kill the Alchemist in his Observatory.
From Darkness... Light!	Silver	Reimprison Ahri-man.
To be continued...	Gold	Complete the game (including the extra ending).

Keep your eye out for the flares and plan your route on the fly



MIDNIGHT CLUB LOS ANGELES

Time to take a fall

We know, we know. Making it big as a racer in LA is proving much more difficult than you thought it would be. For starters there are the damned cops, who are all over you like a rash. Then there's the fact that your piece of junk car simply can't compete with some of the other peeps. What's an illegal street racer to do? Never fear, OPS tips and tricks is here!

STARTING OUT

Midnight Club LA is a different breed of racer. Although it leans heavily towards the arcade end of the spectrum, it's not quite as accessible as something like *Burnout Paradise*. The *Midnight Club* series has always been the hardcore gamer's choice of racer, and there will be times when you'll feel like throwing your controller at the

television in frustration.

If you approach the game with a mindset that you can accept defeat – and a lot of it – then your time with *MCLA* is going to be a lot more enjoyable. That said, there are certainly many elements out to stymie you in each race.

Traffic is the most difficult element to get the hang of, and for the first few hours you'll crash so many times that you'll feel completely hopeless. But after a while you'll get an eye for upcoming markers and clues on traffic density. Look for the lights of oncoming vehicles, and for the rear/brake lights of vehicles going in your direction. This makes it somewhat easier to avoid collisions.

Your opponent racers are a bit less predictable, but if you find yourself eating their dust all the time, it's a good tip to

use their drift stream to build up enough oomph for a free nitrous burst. It's also possible to bully and shove the other racers into the paths of oncoming traffic. This feels really awesome when pulled off.

The city itself is something that you really do need to explore. Take the time to chill out, drive around and find shortcuts – this will serve you extremely well during the game.

If in doubt during a race, don't forget that you can hit 'Select' and bring up a real-time map of LA. Use it to study which turns you need to make or to spy that much needed shortcut.

COLLECTIBLES

If you're not sure what the collectibles in this game look like, they are yellow barrels with the Rockstar logo on them. They are

hidden very well, so be sure to explore. Here's what you can unlock as you collect them:

- 10 barrels** – Unlimited nitro
- 20 barrels** – Avoid damaging out
- 30 barrels** – Unlimited special abilities
- 40 barrels** – Unlocks a top-down view
- 50 barrels** – Turns the police off
- 60 barrels** – Stops the police from issuing fines

EVADING THE LAW

The cops are very difficult to outrun in *MCLA*, but sometimes you'll find yourself in a situation where you need to shake their heat. The best way to do this is to first outrun them a small distance and then to find a carpark area or narrow alleyway in which to hide.



You need to break line of sight for this to work. Possible methods include driving to the top of a car parking structure and jumping off the top, or moving the chase onto the highway, looking for a hidden exit to quickly jump off. Sometimes, though, you just need to put your hands up and accept the fine!

JUST KEEP RACING

Races are divided up into difficulty levels, with green being the easiest and red the hardest. Interestingly, you will actually find the game much more accommodating if you stick to your guns and finish each race – even if you're terribly behind. The game seems to compensate somewhat for your skill level and after a few dismal rounds you should start to get on top of things.

It's also worth noting that although

you initially receive a woeful amount of money per race early on, these amounts vastly improve later on in the game. You're actually better off investing in some performance upgrades for your current vehicle, rather than saving up for a more expensive one.

Plenty of cars can be won later on in the game via main story missions and pink slip races. You'll also level up your special abilities, which can really help you during some of the more intense races.

It truly is a case of good things coming to those who wait. Good luck and we'll see you on the streets!

— Dylan Burns



INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

My precious...



BORDERLANDS

Space, blah blah. FPS, blah blah. RPG touches, blah blah. Colonisation, blah blah. Vehicular combat, blah blah. Alien technology, blah blah. Devolution, blah blah. Inspired by *Mad Max*, bla... hey, hang on a minute, this one's sounding kind of cool!



CUBOID

The PSN is in store for a welcome booster shot of puzzle action with this blocky brain-breaker. Imagine crossing *Jenga* with *Marble Madness* if spheres hadn't been invented, as you 'roll' your blocks and manoeuvre them into holes. Sounds easy? BWAHAHA!



DARK VOID

Take the Bermuda Triangle, aerial combat, ground combat, zeppelins (cannae forget those!) and mix them all up in an enormous Capcom bowl and this might be the result. But the best ingredient? You hoon around with a jetpack strapped to your back, *Rocketeer* style!



L.A. NOIRE

Rockstar have taken their sweet time with this one, but we're promised it'll smack us in the kissers soon. Set in a film noir-inspired Los Angeles of the 1940s, solving murders is the order of the day – like all those ace B&W flicks of the era... or *L.A. Confidential*.



THE OUTSIDER

If the name David Braben draws a blank, you're missing a massive chunk of gaming history – two syllables, 'Ei' and 'ite'. Trading space for Washington DC, you're a disgraced CIA operative in a non-linear techno-thriller – we're expecting BIG things.



SNOOPY WORLD WAR I FLYING ACE

It's okay. It's alright. You can admit it. Well, we can – Snoopy's kind of groovy. Whilst the PS2 and PSP games were decidedly kiddie in their outlook – and play – this one's promising a bit more challenge, along with multiplayer and more. Plus it looks, erm, ace!

SIMPLY THE BEST...

All of our top rated games so far...



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

Arguably the best PS3 game to date – an endlessly replayable masterpiece.

10



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

A technical beast, featuring the most intricate, well designed city environments ever.

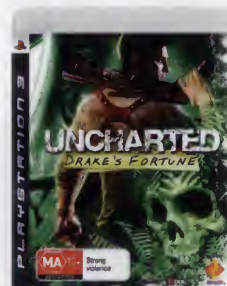
10



CALL OF DUTY 4

Blasts past at a blistering 60 frames per second, with the best set pieces ever.

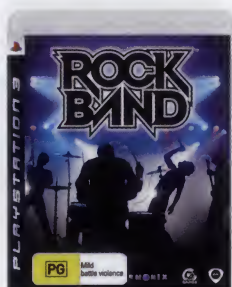
10



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

Visually, the best game on the market, with perfectly balanced gameplay.

10



ROCK BAND

The best party game ever conceived, with an incredible setlist that continues to expand.

10



ASSASSIN'S CREED

One of the few next-gen games that truly plays like a next-gen game – incredible vision.

10



MOTORSTORM

A mind-blowing racing experience, and our personal favourite launch title.

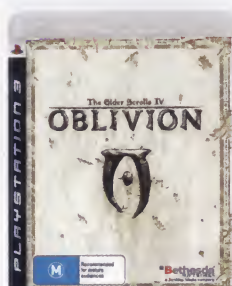
10



RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

A solid single player campaign, and an absolutely stellar multiplayer mode.

10



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Few games can match *Oblivion* in terms of sheer scope. The best RPG on the PS3.

10



LITTLEBIG PLANET

Videogaming will never be the same again – endlessly rewarding and replayable.

10

TOP 5 BEAT 'EM UPS

HEAVENLY SWORD

It may not be THE greatest now, but who didn't get gravel rash on their jaw upon first clapping eyes on this?



NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

Being black-clad and sneaky has never been this hot, as the best of both previous *Ninja Gaiden* worlds combined with next gen awesome.



SOULCALIBUR IV

Always a super-cool series in its own right, and the injection of *Star Wars* action will drive fanboys over the edge!



STREET FIGHTER IV

Our old new favourite! There have been some imitators, but this series was the originator, and the fourth manages to be both faithful AND fresh.



VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

The sequels keep on comin', but who cares when they're as fun as this almighty, pure arcade pulp 'em up? One of the best PS3 launch titles, it doesn't get enough kudos.



TOP 5 LBP DRESS-UPS

KRATOS

Call him cute and he'll bash your brains in, 'cos he's Kratos, baby – he's buff, brutal and mean! Oh, and he's full of fluffy, fleecy stuffing stuff.



LOCOROCO

Careful when melding *LittleBigPlanet* with the blobular stars of the *LocoRoco* series, or you may overdose on cutesy-wutesy!



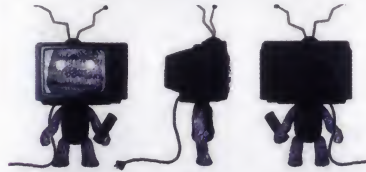
MOTORSTORM

Aww, come on! How could you not just adore a little Sackboy who looks like he's impersonating The Stig from *Top Gear*?



SACK-IN-THE-BOX

We're proud TV heads, however we've never been quite so literal about it. There's no such subtlety from our sackinated little dude.



STREET FIGHTER

A sacky Ryu? Yeah. A sacky Gulle? Hmm. A sacky Zangief? M'OK. A sacky Chun-Li? Wa-hey, you better believe it! The original goddess of fighting games is fully sack!



UNDER THE RADAR



ALIEN HOMINID

Itchy and Scratchy? Pussies!

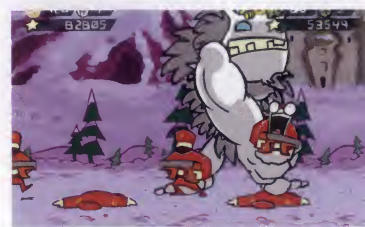
Erm, well, a pussy and a mouse – dang, there goes that analogy.

What we're getting at is that, when it comes to cartoon violence, you may think those two sworn foes from *The Simpsons* rule the roost. If that's the case, you've never experienced *Alien Hominid*.

Entirely hand drawn – and we emphasise entirely – this classic-styled shooter was full of all the goodies the term 'classic-styled shooter' implies: wicked horizontal, parallax scrolling, weapons that power-up the longer you survive and bosses that take up more screen real estate than an extreme close-up of the Comic Book Guy. It was also so incredibly bloody hard that if you managed to make it through the entire 16 levels you were officially declared a God. Or so we hear.

Originally a smaller Flash game on the net, the transference of the little yellow alien (who looked a little bit like Pikachu if he happened to be REALLY pissed off) to PS2 saw everything made bigger, bolder, louder, funnier and generally more awesome. Taking out agents preventing you from retrieving your crashed spacecraft was a blast – literally – as you shot them, sliced and diced them, scooped them with grenades, hid underground then grabbed them, jumped on their heads and decapitated them and more – with all the cartoon blood squirtiness such carnage implies.

It admittedly had its rough spots, but for fans of the unique, on both a visual and sonic level, that still worship classics like *Metal Slug*, *Mega Man* and *Contra*, this superb super-challenge deserves some lovin'.



READER REVIEWS MIRROR'S EDGE

I admit I got this game because it simply looked really cool and graphically it might actually push the PS3 harder than some of the average games out there, *SingStar* for PS3, HA! I laugh at thee.

But I also heard good things about the

easy to grasp controls and I'm also a big parkour fan (even though I've been banned after the wrist breaking incident).

So, I was at first happy to take Faith at full speed through a visually interesting world and take the 'drug running', I mean information running business on. The only problem I found was

the goofball convos. I mean why not invest in dialogue, guys? The best part is definitely the time trial stuff at the end and all in all a good buy.

✉ **Jamie Harrison**

Send us your reader review to ops@derwenthoward.com.au

INFAMOUS

▶ "Watch me plummet to my impending doom! Waaaatch me!" "Alright, I'm watching" "Hey, you weren't watching!"



▶ Real time drool physics – maybe next gen...



ICO

The story of a horny boy and the girl he drags around with him

Prince of Persia (the new one) owes quite a lot to *Ico* – a game that thoroughly impressed the 23 people who played it in Australia around 2001. You play as a boy, who happens to have been born with some funky-looking horns on his head. These days they'd give horn boy his own reality show.

The villagers, however, see this as a bad omen and banish the horned hero to a temple. In a box.

However, it appears that the boy's fate is *not* to slowly suffocate in a box, but rather explore and escape the massive, and beautiful, castle inside. The graphics have the same slightly washed-out quality as *Shadow of the Colossus*, which isn't surprising as both were made by the same team.

Whereas *Colossus* went for huge monsters, *Ico* goes for crazy, massive three dimensional environments. Also you give yourself the task of taking care of the waifish lass Yorda.

Yorda's a bit crap at the jumping, climbing and other platformy skills you have, so

you have to help her using ropes, pulleys, switches and common sense.

That's not to say there's no biff. Strange, shadowy creatures are always trying to drag you or Yorda away. You must smite them with your sword and keep their dirty paws off your woman!

The game does drag in some sections, especially when you have trouble with a puzzle! But that frustration has an equal amount of satisfaction when you pull it off.

Ico is the ultimate boy meets girl fantasy. The boy seems younger, brash and cute in opposition to Yorda's strangely sad beauty. Of course all the beautiful backgrounds, sumptuous visuals and amazing music would all be for nothing if there wasn't a point to it all. And there is, you eventually have to fight an evil witch – a great boss fight, it has to be said – and things get really weird as Yorda appears to die... but washes up on a beach with you in human form. Beautiful, ambiguous and loved by anyone with working hearts and brains, *Ico* still remains a unique gem.

▶ Anthony O'Connor

MORE PLEASE!

Okay, guys, you've made *Ico*, you've made *Shadow of the Colossus*. These games stretched the power of the PS2 to its limits – quite frankly we're gagging for what you'll do next! A combination of *Ico* and *Shadow* would be amazing, but just make something! Games with this much soul are incredibly rare and should be treasured as the works of art they are.





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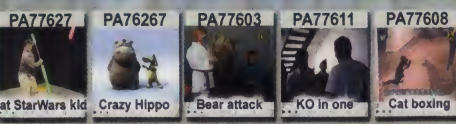
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HELLBOY II
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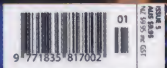
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